



Barnet's Future Library Service: Final Report of the Consultation Outcomes

Report of Findings for



Opinion Research Services

July 2015

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The Strand · Swansea · SA1 1AF

01792 535300 | www.ors.org.uk | info@ors.org.uk

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The ORS Project Team

Project design, management and reporting

Kester Holmes

Ben Lee

Kelly Lock

Alys Thomas

Claire Thomas

Research support

Tara McNeill

Data processing

Joseph DeMarco

Data analysis

Richard Harris

Joe Marchant

Timothy Driscoll

Sophie Griffiths

Matjaž Bone

1. Consultation Overview

Commission and Methodology

Overview

- 1.1 Despite economic growth, Barnet Council faces a significant budget gap of £72m over the period 2016/17 to 2019/20, driven by further reductions in government spending and increased pressure on local services as the population grows and changes. In order to meet this gap the Council will need to look across all service areas to find efficiencies and identify ways to deliver services differently.
- 1.2 Barnet wants to continue to offer high quality library services to all its residents but is proposing to change how it delivers these services to respond to the financial challenge, as well as to make the most of emerging opportunities to meet people’s needs in new and different ways. By developing a new model of library provision, the Council hopes to work more efficiently while ensuring that the library service remains well suited to the needs of the local community.
- 1.3 Based on the findings from earlier consultation exercises carried out in 2011 and 2014, the Council has developed three potential options for how Barnet’s library service could be provided in the future on a reduced budget. The potential savings that these options identify for the service between 2016 and 2020 add up to £2.85m. Between November 2014 and February 2015, London Borough of Barnet asked residents and other stakeholders to share their views on these options – and the principles underlying them – as part of a wide-ranging consultation exercise.
- 1.4 Opinion Research Services (ORS) is a spin-out company from Swansea University with a UK-wide reputation for social research and major statutory consultations. ORS was appointed by LBB to process the questionnaire responses, facilitate consultation events, convene deliberative discussion groups with residents and to provide an independent report of the formal consultation programme.

Nature of Consultation

Accountability

- 1.5 Consultation should promote accountability and assist decision making: public bodies should give an account of their plans or proposals and they should ensure that all responses are taken into account in order to:
 - » Be informed of any issues, viewpoints, implications or options that might have been overlooked;
 - » Re-evaluate matters already known; and
 - » Review priorities and principles.
- 1.6 Nevertheless, a consultation is not a vote; and influencing public policy through consultation is not simply a ‘numbers game’ in which the loudest voices or the greatest numbers automatically determine the outcome, for all of the various consultation methods have to be assessed.

- 1.7 All types of consultation responses are important – for example, from LBB we received a range of different responses from individuals and organisations as a result of the following activities. The table below outlines the number of responses received by consultation element:

Figure 1: Overview of the consultation elements

Type	Element	Number of responses/participants
Quantitative (All administered by LBB)	Survey of citizens’ panel <i>(a broadly representative group of residents recruited at random by LBB to help it research how residents feel about particular issues)</i>	602
	Main questionnaire	2,191
	Easy Read questionnaire	2
	Staff questionnaire	88
	Young people’s questionnaire	47
	Children’s questionnaire	51
	User groups questionnaire	20
	TOTAL QUANTITATIVE RESPONSES	3,001
Qualitative	Drop-in sessions in libraries <i>(14 sessions + 3 days on the mobile library route)</i>	339
	Focus groups with residents <i>(12 x 2 hour sessions with various groups)</i>	115
	Focus groups with staff <i>(2 x 2 hour sessions with LBB library staff)</i>	18
	Deliberative events with members of the public <i>(3 x 2 hour events)</i>	43
	Depth telephone interviews with users of the home library service	10
	Written submissions <i>(68 from individuals and groups, and a further 114 from local children - seemingly as part of an organised school-based activity)</i>	182
	LBB meetings <i>(14 meetings/ drop in with particular interest groups)</i>	172
	TOTAL QUALITATIVE RESPONSES (noting that some individuals may have contributed to more than one consultation strand)	852
Overall	TOTAL RESPONSES OVERALL	3,853

- 1.8 This report identifies where strength of feeling may be particularly strong while recognising that interpreting consultation is not simply a matter of counting responses.

Interpreting Outcomes

- 1.9 Importantly, the different consultation methods cannot just be combined to yield a single scenario that reconciles everyone’s differences and is acceptable to all LBB individuals and stakeholders – for two main reasons:
- » First, the various consultation methods differ in their nature and their outcomes cannot be just aggregated into a single result
 - » Second, **different stakeholders will inevitably have different perspectives on the possible options and in our experience there is no formula in any consultation process that can reconcile everyone’s differences in a single way forward.**
- 1.10 It is also important to recognise that the outcomes of the consultation process will need to be considered alongside other information available about the likely impact of each of the proposed options. Whilst the consultation process highlights aspects of this information that stakeholders consider to be important, LBB will need to consider the appropriate emphasis to be placed on each element. In this sense there can be no single ‘right’ interpretation of all the consultation elements and other information available to the LBB in their decision-making process. ORS is clear that its role is to analyse and explain the opinions and arguments of those who have responded to the consultation, but not to recommend any option or variant.
- 1.11 Whilst this report brings together a wide range of evidence for LBB to consider, the report does not provide a single answer for the future pattern of library services across the borough. It is for LBB to take decisions based on their understanding of the quality and sustainability of the services they are able to commission in the future and other relevant considerations, including equalities. In their deliberations, LBB will need review the evidence and considerations that have emerged during consultation while also taking account of all the other relevant evidence.

2. Executive Summary

Summary of Main Findings

- 2.1 This executive summary report brings together the feedback received through each of the different consultation elements and provides a comprehensive evidence base to help inform the decision-making process for LBB. This summary concisely reviews the full range of feedback received, and brings together those common themes that have emerged. Verbatim quotations (all of which are italicised) are used not because we agree or disagree with them – but for their vividness in capturing recurrent points of view. ORS does not endorse the statements made, but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly. We trust that this summary is a sound guide to the consultation outcomes and how they might be interpreted, but readers are urged to consult our full report for more detailed insights.

Key themes

- 2.2 In summary, the findings show there are some significant concerns around some of the proposals (and also around the three options proposed by LBB, each of which incorporate different aspects of these). However, it should also be noted that there is fairly widespread support in principle for some of the proposed changes. The following summary of key themes indicates the main areas of agreement and disagreement across the diverse consultation strands, along with any further issues raised.
- 2.3 The results of the panel survey and the main questionnaire suggested little support for library closures in principle, with the questionnaire respondents being particularly strongly opposed. However, there was also some sense – particularly among staff, but also in the public focus groups – that having fewer libraries might be preferable to maintaining a larger network of smaller sites. Across the various strands, many condemned the proposed minimum average size of 540 square feet as being far too small to accommodate many of the activities and facilities which are currently located in libraries.
- 2.4 There was widespread praise of the expertise and professionalism of Barnet's library staff, and a strong sense that these qualities could never be adequately replaced through the use of volunteers. Hence, while there was support across the various strands for increasing the use of volunteers, this was frequently on the proviso that they should only be used to complement the work of paid staff (that is, not to replace them).
- 2.5 There was a strong sense across the qualitative strands that the library service could be far more enterprising and visionary in terms of income generation, and there were many suggestions for how revenue could be generated e.g. cafés and limited charges for activities. Similarly, panellists and questionnaire respondents tended to be supportive of proposals such as increased hiring out of library space, as well as advertising and sponsorship. Nonetheless, there were some caveats (e.g. it was suggested that not all sponsors would necessarily be appropriate partners), along with some sense that libraries should maintain their public character and ethos, without becoming unduly commercial.
- 2.6 Many respondents and panellists found it difficult to prioritise which should be the most important times and days for staffed opening, with many suggestions that libraries should be staffed as widely as possible. While the qualitative feedback suggested some support for extending opening hours, there was criticism of

the 'open library' model on grounds that it would pose a security risk to users, stock and facilities; as well as diluting the overall quality of the service provided. These misgivings were also shared by many of the panellists and questionnaire respondents.

- 2.7 There was some interest in the possibility of exploring other delivery models (although it should be stressed that the use of commercial providers was widely opposed), as well as some openness to redeveloping sites or exploring other locations. However, some questioned the extent of any cost savings that would be realised as a result of these measures, or felt that it was difficult to comment without reference to specific proposals. Many staff could see advantages to the idea of a staff owned mutual; however, another theme that emerged strongly in both the focus groups and the staff questionnaire was a sense that more information is needed to help inform staff about how this might work in practice.
- 2.8 The remainder of this executive summary provides further detail about the points raised in relation to these themes, and also provides further information about key similarities and differences in the views of different groups.

The role and objectives of libraries

Quantitative feedback: panel survey and main questionnaire

- 2.9 In general, the results for both strands showed widespread agreement with the four objectives.
- 2.10 In particular, there was near universal support for '*A library service that provides children and adults with reading, literacy and learning opportunities*' (98% of panellists; 99% of respondents) and '*A library service that makes knowledge and information easily accessible*' (94% of panellists; 98% of respondents).
- 2.11 There was a little less support for the objective '*A library service that can withstand current and future financial challenges and safeguard services for vulnerable people*', with some text comments expressing a view that it was inappropriate to bundle together financial considerations with concerns for the vulnerable; or that the objective should be more inclusive in its scope i.e. not restricted to the vulnerable. However, the majority were supportive of this objective, as evidenced by the fact that 88% of respondents and 87% of panellists agreed with it.
- 2.12 The remaining objective – '*A library service that engages with communities*' – was agreed with by 80% of panellists and 92% of respondents.
- 2.13 Many of the further comments provided focused on the value of libraries more generally, or with specific reference to their importance for children's and adults' education, community engagement, qualified staff etc.

Quantitative feedback: other questionnaires

- 2.14 The majority of respondents to the staff questionnaire and the young people's questionnaire also agreed with the objectives.

Qualitative feedback

- 2.15 In considering the primary benefits of libraries (which many felt had been "*forgotten within the options paper rationale*"), public and staff focus group participants, drop-in attendees, some LBB meeting participants and many written submissions felt that they:

Are socially accessible to all members of the community (and particularly more disadvantaged residents);

Help prevent social isolation by giving lonely older and other vulnerable people an opportunity to socialise in a warm, friendly environment and offering a meeting point for a number of people who could potentially be *stuck at home*;

Offer migrant residents opportunities to learn English and integrate into local community;

Promote literacy and e-literacy skills, offer spaces for learning and activities, provide facilities for residents that cannot access them elsewhere and encourage social mobility;

Play an essential role in children's development (in terms of introducing them to literature and the activities they attend) and instilling rules, respect and discipline in early childhood;

Provide important meeting space for various organisations; and

Offer independence to people with Physical and Sensory Impairment and a place of respite for carers.

- 2.16 It was also said that the role of libraries cannot be taken in isolation and that they must be considered in the context of the benefits they bring to other services – and that the loss of much of what is considered a very valuable service (especially for the most disadvantaged members of the community) cannot be justified by the *'pittance'* any changes will save.

Approaches to save money

Quantitative feedback: panel survey and main questionnaire

- 2.17 The only proposal that was supported by majorities of both panellists and questionnaire respondents was using volunteers to enhance the services provided by paid staff (85% of panellists; 59% of respondents).
- 2.18 The following proposals were supported by majorities of panellists, but minorities of respondents: community run libraries (73% of panellists; 35% of respondents) and unstaffed opening, using technology to extend opening hours (59% of panellists; 28% of respondents).
- 2.19 Across both strands, there was little support for closing six libraries (6% of panellists; 3% of respondents) and closing two libraries (25% of panellists; 8% of respondents).
- 2.20 There was also only limited support for reducing the size of libraries (37% of panellists; 12% of respondents); unstaffed opening, using technology as a replacement for staffed opening hours (35% of panellists; 13% of respondents); reducing the amount of money spent on stock (30% of panellists; 12% of respondents); and reducing staffed opening hours (29% of panellists; 12% of respondents).
- 2.21 Panellists were therefore generally more supportive than the main questionnaire respondents when presented with the possible approaches to help save money, although there were still a number of proposals which most panellists did not support. It is also worth noting that panellists who identified themselves as current users of the library service tended to be less supportive of many of these proposals, compared with non-users.

Quantitative feedback: other questionnaires

- 2.22 All of the proposals were opposed by the majority of respondents to the staff questionnaire, though there was least opposition to reducing the amount of money spent on stock, closing two libraries, and using volunteers to enhance the services provided by paid staff.
- 2.23 Large majorities of staff questionnaire respondents opposed reducing the size of libraries, either in principle or to a minimum average of 540 square feet. Most of the user group respondents were also opposed.
- 2.24 The use of volunteers to enhance services was the only proposal which a majority of user group respondents supported.
- 2.25 Most of the respondents to the children's and young people's questionnaires would be unhappy with libraries closing or being made smaller.

Qualitative feedback

- 2.26 Qualitative feedback about the approaches to save money has been summarised alongside the feedback about the different options to which these relate (see p. 25 below).

Opening hours and staffing

Quantitative feedback: panel survey and main questionnaire

- 2.27 The questionnaire encouraged respondents and panellists to prioritise particular days and times when libraries would need to be staffed, although these questions were left unanswered by many.
- 2.28 The valid answers which were provided showed some preference for Saturdays and weekdays – however, Sunday also picked up a number of second preferences. When respondents and panellists were asked about times of day, late morning and early evening emerged strongly, and there was also support for staffed opening during afternoons.
- 2.29 The proportion of panellists who said that they would feel confident about using an unstaffed library (63%) was more than twice the proportion of main questionnaire respondents who felt this way (30%).
- 2.30 While the majority of respondents and panellists indicated that the use of volunteers might encourage them to use an unstaffed library, the view of many individuals providing further comments was that they would not be an adequate replacement for highly qualified, experienced and professional members of staff (although there was some support for a view that volunteers could supplement the existing service).
- 2.31 Other criticisms of the unstaffed library model were:
- Library users would not feel safe or secure when using an unstaffed library
 - Stock and equipment would be at risk of theft or damage
 - CCTV is an inadequate security measure, particularly if it is not being monitored in 'real time'
 - There would be nobody at hand to assist users with any queries;
 - There would be nobody at hand to respond to or manage difficult situations e.g. medical emergencies, accidents on-site, disagreements and arguments, etc.

Self-service technology is unreliable and many users (particularly more elderly individuals) would be unable to use the technology if a member of staff was not available to help them

Unstaffed opening would lead to a decline in the number of people using libraries, and this might be used to justify future closures.

Quantitative feedback: other questionnaires

- 2.32 More than four fifths of respondents to the staff questionnaire (83%) disagreed that the approach for extending opening times was suitable.
- 2.33 Most respondents to the user groups questionnaire reported that they would not be confident in using an unstaffed library.
- 2.34 Both easy read respondents said they would be 'quite unhappy' about using a library without staff being there.
- 2.35 The results to the children's and young people's questionnaires suggest that many of these respondents would be happy with the proposals for extending opening hours and using new technology to allow unstaffed opening. However, there was less support among young people for reducing staffed opening hours.

Qualitative feedback

- 2.36 It was largely agreed that residents (especially young residents) would benefit from increasing library opening hours to include more evenings and weekends. Despite its potential to extend opening hours though, most participants across all consultation strands typically disapproved of the open library system, mainly due to concerns around personal safety and theft.
- 2.37 Other significant concerns were around: the security of library stock and the potential for vandalism and other anti-social behaviour; the potentially negative effect of unstaffed libraries on library users - particularly more vulnerable users - requiring advice, assistance and technical support from staff; and the restrictions on library access for under 16s (which could, though, apparently be mitigated against through the use of a small cohort of volunteers during unstaffed hours or ensuring that some staffed hours are provided after-school and on weekends). In relation to the latter point, it was also said that the system could be detrimental to young carers, as libraries offer them a safe place to *"get away from being a carer"*.
- 2.38 Drop-in attendees cited the potential inappropriateness of developing a system around peak hours insofar as different types of library users use the service at different times. It was thus suggested that many users will be disadvantaged by only having staff available at what are considered to be traditionally 'peak' times.
- 2.39 In terms of particular groups, it was said at some of the LBB-run meetings that use of the open library would be difficult for people with learning disabilities or a physical and/or sensory impairment. With regard to the latter, particular concerns were raised around negotiating library buildings and computer systems (including any computerised entry systems which, it was said, should be fully accessible) without staff assistance - and for a person with learning disabilities, worries were around: remembering PIN numbers; and successfully checking out books without assistance from staff or a carer. However, it was also said that some people with learning disabilities, given the right training, would be able to use

an unstaffed library, and that for those who cannot consideration should be given to extending the chip and pin library entry system to carers - perhaps via the ability to pre-register a 'guest' on a user's card.

- 2.40 A very small number of focus group participants, drop-in and LBB-run meeting attendees, and written submissions supported the open library system as a means of increasing opening hours and as a constructive way to maintain services - providing residents are made fully aware of when staff will be available for assistance. Further, it was said that opening hours should be amended to capture those who wish to use the library either early in the morning or late at night - and there was some recognition that unstaffed hours may allow this.

Relocation and redevelopment

Quantitative feedback: panel survey and main questionnaire

- 2.41 A comparison of the results to the open questionnaire and the panel survey reveals some significant difference of opinion: while all of the proposed options were opposed by a majority of open questionnaire respondents, all but one option were supported by more than half of panellists.
- 2.42 In spite of this, there was some consistency between the two strands in terms of the most and least preferred options overall.
- 2.43 For example, the following three relocation and redevelopment proposals were the most widely supported across both the strands (albeit with a slight difference in terms of which were the second and third most supported of the proposals):

Redeveloping library sites (creating a new library on the existing site as part of a residential development, with housing above it – an opportunity to create a more accessible, fit for purpose library building) (76% of panellists; 49% of respondents);

Building a new library not on, but near to, the existing site (70% of panellists; 46% of respondents);

Moving the library into an existing, accessible venue, near to the current site (74% of panellists; 43% of respondents).

- 2.44 Furthermore, both strands showed least support for moving a smaller library into a nearby, accessible property leased from another landowner (36% of panellists; 18% of respondents).
- 2.45 The further comments which were made were most likely to express a view that libraries should not be moved or closed, or that libraries are already in appropriate locations. There was some feeling that any relocation would not be cost-effective, either because of the expense involved in moving or because it would represent a waste of the resources had already been invested into the libraries in their current locations.

Quantitative feedback: other questionnaires

- 2.46 At least half of staff questionnaire respondents supported redeveloping library sites; building a new library as part of a new development near to the existing site; moving the library into an existing, accessible venue, near to the current site; and moving the library into an alternative, nearby, accessible Council or public sector partner building.
- 2.47 More respondents to the young people's questionnaire disagreed than agreed with moving libraries to a new site or redeveloping them.

Qualitative feedback

- 2.48 Drop-in attendees and some written submissions were not adverse to redeveloping libraries, either on existing sites or elsewhere: they acknowledged that some are currently poorly located and difficult and expensive to maintain. For example, at the Mill Hill and Chipping Barnet drop-in sessions it was suggested that careful consideration should be given to mixed developments incorporating residential housing or retail developments and libraries. This was echoed by staff, many of whom were keen to see libraries moved to more appropriate buildings and locations nearer town centres.

Generating income

Quantitative feedback: panel survey and main questionnaire

- 2.49 At least half of both respondents and panellists supported the following proposals, although larger proportions of panellists tended to be supportive:

Increased hiring out of library space (82% of panellists; 79% of respondents);

Installing commercial collection points (e.g. Amazon lockers) (83% of panellists; 64% of respondents);

Advertising and sponsorship (82% of panellists; 67% of respondents);

'Barnet Libraries Supporters Scheme' available on subscription (74% of panellists; 59% of respondents);

Installing more vending machines (62% of panellists; 50% of respondents).

- 2.50 Hiring out of parking spaces was supported by about half of panellists and a slightly smaller proportion (45%) of questionnaire respondents. Across both strands, only a minority supported reviewing fees and charges to explore additional increases (46% of panellists; 38% of respondents).

- 2.51 The questionnaire also provided an opportunity to make further comments about the income generation proposals, and make any further suggestions. Nearly a fifth (17%) of questionnaire respondents and more than a fifth of panellists (22%) who commented were supportive of increased hiring out of library space, and a tenth of questionnaire respondents (10%) suggested introducing more events, activities and classes into the library (potentially charging a small amount to attend these).

- 2.52 Among those who commented, there was also some support for introducing cafés into libraries (10% of panellists; 8% of respondents) or introducing minimal charges for services (11% of panellists; 8% of respondents).

- 2.53 However, there was some concern about the potential harmful impacts of charging fines for children's stock (e.g. on the basis that this might discourage reading, although it is worth noting that a few individuals thought this could work if given careful consideration),. There were also concerns around hiring out car parking spaces (e.g. on basis this might reduce the spaces available for library users) and introducing vending machines (e.g. on basis they might promote unhealthy eating choices).

Quantitative feedback: other questionnaires

- 2.54 Among respondents to the staff questionnaire, there was widest support for increased hiring out of library space, and also fairly widespread support for advertising and sponsorship.

- 2.55 A majority of respondents to the young people's questionnaire agreed with libraries 'doing different things to make more money'.

Qualitative feedback

- 2.56 There was a strong sense, especially at the drop-in sessions, that the library service could be significantly more enterprising and visionary in terms of income generation.
- 2.57 In terms of creating revenue, participants across the various consultation strands suggested: co-locating a library with a café/coffee shop; hiring out surplus space where possible (for both leisure activities and to businesses for workshops and meetings); charging those who can afford it for computer classes and activities such as Stay and Play, music groups and book clubs; introducing more chargeable services such as soft play, foreign language classes, literacy classes, theatre groups, job clubs, talks, book clubs and a conversation café; developing an online shopping pick-up service; commercial sponsorship; and, importantly, hosting other organisations within libraries - and, where possible, "*charging them for the privilege*".
- 2.58 Staff participants suggested that: "*they could invest in us to train us more. We could then offer professional English and ICT lessons or lessons on how to do tax returns. We could be paid from the Job Centre and other services to provide these lessons*".
- 2.59 There was support for an optional 'Friends of' scheme that incorporates not only a financial subscription but also a requirement to assist with fundraising activities and provide practical hands-on help. Another suggestion at the drop-in sessions was that 'Friends' could be designated key-holders to increase opportunities for evening hire income. Staff, though, objected to a 'Friends of' scheme on the grounds that: "*it's meant to be a free service*".

Alternative delivery models

Quantitative feedback: panel survey and main questionnaire

- 2.60 Among both respondents and panellists, there was clearly most support for libraries being run directly by the Council (93% of panellists; 95% of respondents) and least support for libraries being run by a commercial provider (19% of panellists; 11% of respondents).
- 2.61 Of the remaining proposed delivery models, all were supported by at least half of panellists. However, only libraries being run by an educational body achieved the support of the majority of open questionnaire respondents (84% of panellists; 64% of respondents).
- 2.62 Panellists were also more supportive than questionnaire respondents of: libraries being run as part of a shared service with another council (66% of panellists; 47% of respondents); libraries being run by a staff mutual (50% of panellists; 45% of respondents); and libraries being run by a charitable provider (58% of panellists; 41% of respondents).
- 2.63 Of those questionnaire respondents who provided further comments, nearly a third (30%) expressed views along the line that libraries are a public service which should be run by the Council and not outsourced; the same opinion was expressed by more than a fifth (22%) of panellists who commented.
- 2.64 A number of questionnaire respondents expressed disagreement with the use of a commercial provider to deliver the service, either in general or on the specific grounds e.g. that a commercial provider would only be interested in profit, to the detriment of the quality of service provided.

- 2.65 15% of panellists who commented felt uneasy about the possibility of different providers being able to exercise too much influence on decisions about purchasing stock.

Quantitative feedback: other questionnaires

- 2.66 Among staff questionnaire respondents, the only delivery model which received widespread support was libraries being run directly by the council. Of the remaining alternatives, there was most support for libraries being run by a staff owned mutual, through a shared service with another council, and by an educational body.
- 2.67 The preferred options among easy read respondents were libraries run by the council or a college/university.

Qualitative feedback

Staff-owned Mutual

- 2.68 Some staff could see advantages to a staff-owned mutual, namely that it would allow: library professionals to run their own service; more autonomy and freedom in terms of, say, stock and discretionary charging; charitable status and associated fundraising activities; and non-payment of rent on buildings. Concerns, though, were around: sustainability; changing terms and conditions; the potential for a target- and profit-driven service; and whether staff would want to join a mutual given they allegedly no longer work for a service in which they have confidence.
- 2.69 Staff also desired more information about how mutuals would work in practice so they can make an informed decision as to whether it is a delivery model worthy of pursuit.
- 2.70 While most focus group participants agreed that library staff are highly skilled and capable of running some aspects of the library service, they were sceptical about how well they could manage and administer it as a whole. There was also some concern that a staff-owned mutual is not a sustainable alternative to a Council-run service (a view echoed by the home library users who felt that, while librarians should have a greater role in decision-making, LBB should not relinquish its management role). There was, however, some support for this model in one of the non-user groups on the grounds that it has worked for other agencies and that staff have the requisite knowledge to deliver a better service than LBB.
- 2.71 In the deliberative events, one group of participants developed the idea of a staff-owned mutual model along the following lines:

Convening a group involving current library staff, users and other interested parties, converting the service into a new employee Mutual or Trust, and introducing some form of 'libraries precept';

Moving to a broader 'curriculum' of library services and activities, with strategic emphasis on revenue generation and fundraising balanced with reading, information access and literacy;

Creating closer links with school leadership teams, children's centre managers and youth services to focus efforts around literacy and learning and achieve economies of scale, especially through premises and staffing;

Entering into shared back-office and administrative agreements with other boroughs; and

Offering space and support for new business start-ups; generating room hire income from business meetings and workspace (with similar service standards and prices to commercial offer); holding revenue-orientated events; and offering good coffee shops, Wi-Fi and retail to drive footfall and add revenue.

- 2.72 This model, they felt, would: strengthen leadership focus in the service; increase its grant-seeking ability; and secure non-domestic business rates savings on premises.

Other delivery models

- 2.73 The majority of focus group participants (public and staff), drop-in attendees and home library users opposed outsourcing to a private operator, primarily as they did not feel delivering library services should be a profit-making enterprise and because of poor previous experience (indeed, with particular regard to library staff, their attitudes towards outsourcing seem to have been influenced by their perceptions of what has happened within other LBB departments - as well as their view of the effect such significant levels of outsourcing have had on Barnet as a Council). The only differing opinions were provided by the Mill Hill Preservation Society (which suggested *“an outsource (not-for-profit) provider at a saving on central cost, as has been adopted for many other Borough services”*) and the Mill Hill Residents Association (which felt that outsourcing to a commercial organisation - or indeed a mutual or co-operative - should be considered).
- 2.74 There was some support in the focus groups and drop-in sessions for merging with an educational body insofar as there are potential efficiency benefits - as well as for alternative delivery via a Trust or some form of community partnership.

Specific services

Quantitative feedback: panel survey and main questionnaire

- 2.75 The majority of respondents and panellists agreed with maintaining all of the listed services at the current level, with most support overall for:
- Having support and activities for children, adults and teenagers available in all staffed libraries (82% of panellists; 88% of respondents);
 - Maintaining the early years’ service at current levels (82% of panellists; 87% of respondents);
 - Maintaining the School Libraries Resources Service at current levels (80% of panellists; 84% of respondents).
- 2.76 While majorities agreed with the proposal to continue to offer financial support to the community libraries at Friern Barnet and Hampstead Garden Suburb (73% of respondents; 62% of panellists), this was the least widely supported of the proposals for maintaining specific services.
- 2.77 Majorities also agreed with improving self-service online technology (87% of panellists; 69% of respondents) and maintaining or increasing the e-books, e-audio and other online resources and learning materials which are available to library users (82% of panellists; 68% of respondents).
- 2.78 When invited to suggest any other alternatives for the library service, 11% of respondents commented about increasing the use of libraries by providing other services or making more creative use of space;

the same proportion felt library space could be rented out to small businesses, or that libraries could be co-located with other services in a ‘community hub’ e.g. a café or shop.

- 2.79 There was also some support for the status quo and/or not cutting the library service (8% of panellists and 16% of respondents who made further comments about alternative proposals that could be made to the library services).

Quantitative feedback: other questionnaires

- 2.80 Large majorities of staff questionnaire respondents agreed with maintaining each of the services, with the exception of continuing to offer financial support to the community libraries in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Friern Barnet.
- 2.81 Majorities of respondents to the young people’s questionnaire agreed with maintaining each of the services.

Qualitative feedback: Maintaining the home and mobile library services

- 2.82 Users (and indeed non-users) of the mobile and/or home library services were relieved to discover that LBB is proposing to maintain them. They were considered essential for those who cannot otherwise visit a library and for older residents and those with limited mobility.
- 2.83 There was, though, some suggestion that LBB could “*make more of*” the mobile library. Indeed, at the drop-in sessions it was said that if any of Barnet’s libraries are to close, the mobile library will become increasingly important - and that if this is the case improvements to certain aspects such as internet access and the range of books on offer are essential.

Qualitative feedback: Digital expansion and new technology

- 2.84 Focus group participants generally supported the expansion of digital resources (including the growth of tablet and eBook rental) and felt this would complement what modern users require of a library service. However, some caution was expressed insofar as technological services do not suit all residents.

Three proposed options

- 2.85 LBB presented three possible options for the library service and asked for views on which would be the most appropriate for the service:

Option 1: The network would consist of four ‘core’ libraries and ten smaller ones, reduced to a minimum of 540 square feet on average. The service would use new technology to extend opening hours by 50%, although staffed opening hours would be half of what they are at the moment. Option 1 provides the largest number of library sites of the three options.

Option 2: The eight largest and/or busiest libraries would stay open. Six libraries would close. The service would use new technology to extend opening hours by 30%, although staffed opening hours would be 60% of what they are at the moment. Option 2 provides the highest level of staffed opening hours of the three.

Option 3: The network would consist of seven large libraries; there would also be a small library in Burnt Oak. Four libraries would be reduced, on average, to a minimum of 540 sq. ft., and offered to local residents and community groups to run as community libraries. Two libraries would close. The

service would use new technology to extend opening hours by 30%, although staffed opening hours would be 50% of what they are at the moment.

- 2.86 LBB stressed that there is, at this stage, no preferred option for the future of Barnet’s libraries and any final strategy may strike a balance between these options, combining elements of each.

Quantitative feedback: panel survey and main questionnaire

- 2.87 All three options (Option 1, Option 2, and Option 3) were opposed by the majority of main questionnaire respondents. On the other hand, majorities of panellists supported them.
- 2.88 Both strands showed most support for Option 1 (70% of panellists; 44% of respondents), albeit with a significant difference in the levels of support shown between the two. Among questionnaire respondents, there was somewhat more support for Option 2 (33%) than Option 3 (21%); however, the panel survey results showed consistent levels of support for both of these options (61% and 62% respectively).
- 2.89 When asked to rank the Options, panellists were most likely to select Option 1 as their preferred option (41% of panellists making a first preference). However, open questionnaire respondents were most likely to select an alternative as their first preference (42% of respondents making a first preference). Relatively few panellists chose to rank an alternative option, presumably reflecting the fact that they were collectively much more supportive of the three options identified by the Council compared with the open questionnaire respondents.
- 2.90 Even though majorities of panellists supported the options, this support is not entirely consistent with results to some of the previous questions which focused on key aspects of the options. For example, relatively small minorities of panellists supported the closure of either two (25%) or six (6%) libraries (features of Option 3 and Option 2 respectively), and less than two fifths (37%) supported the reduction in the size of libraries to an average minimum of 540 square feet (as would happen to ten of the service’s libraries under Option 1). One might speculate as to whether panellists opposed these measures in principle, but were more supportive when they read the full details of the proposals – perhaps because their preferred library was unaffected, or because they were reassured when they read fuller details of the proposals. Nonetheless, this interpretation is speculative and it is difficult to offer any definitive explanation for this apparent contradiction.
- 2.91 The further comments made were most likely to focus upon the unsuitability of all three options, not wanting libraries to close, or a need to maintain the library service as it is.
- 2.92 There were also comments focusing on the value of libraries e.g. as a community facility; along with criticism of the proposal to reduce the size of libraries (to a minimum of 540 square feet on average) and potential impacts on travel times and access as a result of closures. Others reiterated earlier concerns e.g. about the need to retain staff.
- 2.93 Some respondents suggested alternatives to increase revenue (e.g. raising council tax), or make savings elsewhere (with several comments about, amongst other things, curbing councillors’ expenses or reducing the number of council staff on high salaries, and reducing outsourcing or the use of external consultants).

- 2.94 There was also support for increasing revenue, or using a 'community hub' model to co-locate libraries with other services. A tenth of panellists who commented (10%) were supportive of the use of technology.

Quantitative feedback: other questionnaires

- 2.95 The staff questionnaire results showed a consistent pattern of strong opposition to the three options, but particularly Option 3. There was slightly more support for Option 2 than Option 1.
- 2.96 None of the three options stood out as being particularly well or poorly supported among respondents to the user groups questionnaire.
- 2.97 Respondents to the children's questionnaire were most unhappy about Option 2. However, respondents to the young people's questionnaire were slightly more supportive of Option 2 than the remaining options.
- 2.98 One easy read respondent preferred Option 1 overall, while the other preferred Option 3.

Qualitative feedback: general

- 2.99 Although there was recognition that LBB has real budgetary challenges and that the library service must change, many people rejected all three of LBB's proposed options, describing them as, among other terms: '*inappropriate*'; '*over the top*'; '*dire*'; '*painful*'; '*unacceptable*', '*unsatisfactory*', '*restrictive*' and '*unimaginative*'. The general sense was that they display a lack of vision - and that broader, more creative thinking is required for the Council to achieve its required savings target while safeguarding the library service as much as possible.
- 2.100 Staff also questioned the reasoning behind the options and commented that they did not appear to be particularly well-argued, particularly in comparison to those put forward in other areas like Southampton and Hertfordshire.

Qualitative feedback: Option 1

- 2.101 In considering Option 1, the main concerns across all research methodologies were around the proposed reduction in library space: many people could not comprehend what could be provided in a smaller library and assumed that the whole range of service provision would have to be downsized significantly. The general sense was that it would result in: a very restricted number of books and computers; a lack of space for studying or relaxing; and a reduction in the number of activities held at library sites - and it was frequently suggested that downsizing to such a degree would lead to a decrease in the number of people visiting libraries and a non-sustainable service.
- 2.102 Other cited potential consequences of library size reductions were: an increase in social isolation as a result of older people staying at home rather than spending time at the library; and a detrimental impact on those with Learning Disabilities (who value open space).
- 2.103 At the drop-ins it was said that this option may result in fewer savings than anticipated (or indeed savings that are realised some years down the line) due to the costs of reconfiguring the remainder of the library space to render it suitable for commercial or any other rental use. Also, some participants - including staff - foresaw insufficient demand for the remaining space (resulting in less income generation than anticipated).

2.104 Despite the above, there was a degree of support for this option at some focus groups, LBB-run meetings, drop-ins and among some home library users insofar as it would still offer a library service, albeit in a slightly different (some felt more cost-effective) way - and because the additional space freed up could be rented out for community good. Further, some participants weighed this option against the possibility of library closures and, on balance, showed support for it.

Qualitative feedback: Option 2

2.105 On balance, there was more support for Option 2 than Option 1 in the public focus groups on the basis that the total reduction in total library space is lower and the remaining libraries would be more suited to residents' needs. It was also said that this option would result in the loss of only the less used, less viable libraries and the redevelopment of some existing libraries, meaning fewer but 'better' services and more potential for entrepreneurialism – an opinion shared at some drop-in events.

2.106 Several of the 'younger' LBB-run meetings also supported Option 2 – mainly based on their preference for *"fewer but better, more modern libraries that have been invested in and improved"*.

2.107 Staff typically preferred this option and described it as the *"lesser evil"*. That said, their support was based on maintaining current staffing levels and additional investment in the remaining libraries.

2.108 However, a significant number of participants did not support this option on the grounds that they do not want to lose 'any more' libraries and that access to alternative sites may be difficult for some people. The general sense was that closures could lead to the disenfranchisement of a large number of people across the borough - primarily those people who need libraries most. This view was echoed by almost all home library users, drop-in attendees and in many written submissions.

2.109 There was also widespread criticism of the stated aim under Option 2 that '95% of people in Barnet are able to reach a library in less than 30 minutes using public transport' - with some arguing that 30 minutes is too long to travel to a facility that should be as local as possible and not accessible only via often lengthy and complicated journeys. On this issue, it was said that closures have the potential to be very disruptive to people with learning disabilities - though this could be mitigated against to some extent through travel training.

2.110 Drop-in attendees, some LBB-run meeting participants and a few written submissions said that the area's current and forecast population growth has not been sufficiently considered by LBB in developing an option that would result in the closure of six libraries - and it was suggested that the criteria for identifying which libraries remain and which close is somewhat opaque.

Qualitative feedback: Option 3

2.111 While the majority of focus group and drop-in participants were perfectly happy to back the use of volunteers within the library service in a supportive capacity, few endorsed the idea of 'community libraries' whereby there are no librarians involved in the management and facilitation of the service.

2.112 The general sense across all research methodologies was that: the quality of the library service would be negatively affected (research from other areas apparently shows that community-run libraries tend to suffer service decline after a few years); volunteers may not be sufficiently skilled, available or reliable; community-run libraries would not be sustainable and would inevitably close in future; an over-reliance on volunteers will result in the loss of professional staff (the presence of whom was considered vital and irreplaceable in terms of knowledge, management and the unique skill set they

possess); and that volunteers would be from a certain demographic and would thus not cater for the diversity of the area.

- 2.113 Importantly also, staff (as well as a few members of the public and written submissions) feared that community libraries would not be part of the library network, and thus would not be able to deliver the same level of service.
- 2.114 Some public and staff focus group members were aware of the community-run library at Hampstead Garden Suburb and said the area has a '*tight-knit community*' with many willing volunteers. In contrast, some of the areas suggested for community libraries under Option 3 were said to lack this kind of community spirit - and there was concern that the number of volunteers or groups willing to operate libraries would be insufficient given the lack of community activism there.
- 2.115 The only focus group to voice a different view in support of Option 3 was the Gypsy and Traveller group, whose participants explained that a community library would allow members of the Traveller community to get involved in running a local service. Also, all participants in one of the non-user groups, one home library user and some LBB-run meeting attendees agreed that if there was a choice between libraries closing or being kept open through the use of volunteers, they would choose the latter.
- 2.116 It should be noted that the reservations reported above were not in relation to the use of volunteers per se, but only to entirely community-run libraries. Indeed, there was a definite sense that using volunteers could be useful in bolstering current service provision.

Qualitative feedback: Suggested alternative options

- 2.117 Focus group participants (public and staff) and some written submissions strongly supported the idea of 'community hubs': that is, libraries co-located with other community-based services, particularly leisure and social activities. The prospect of co-location with a commercial enterprise was also advocated by the majority of staff.
- 2.118 The creation of 'public services hubs' was suggested at the deliberative events; that is, combined hubs incorporating library services (books, information, literacy support and internet access) and other face-to-face public services. This could include Jobcentre consultations, social care interviews, NHS/public health information and support, and possibly others.
- 2.119 Also at the deliberative events, the following suggestions were made:

Incorporating public libraries into school new-build and refurbishment projects (whereby any potential issues can be overcome at the design stage). The general sense was that co-locating in this way would increase pupils' access to resources and improve provision for the general public;

Meeting the savings target halfway by aiming for £1.42 million in net savings as part of a new business model to deliver an improved and modernised library service. The main features of this model were:

Maximising Section 106 deals to renew the library estate;

Offering Middlesex University added value services for their students for a fee;

Offering to host (again for a fee) services serving demographic groups that overlap with library user-ship - for example youth and older people's services;

Launching a programme of skills courses and classes with strong links to library themes (some organised by the library and some by groups that hire library space);

Developing sharing agreements with neighbouring councils for back office functions;

Hosting evening events when libraries would normally be closed for income generation, overseen by junior staff and assisted by volunteer ushers and greeters;

Opening coffee shops and introducing Amazon/Doddle delivery lockers; and

Exploiting opportunities for advertising and sponsorship.

- 2.120 Closer collaboration and more resource-sharing with neighbouring London boroughs - or indeed other counties such as Hertfordshire and Surrey - was considered desirable in eliminating duplication and making efficiencies without widespread ‘cuts’ to services, as was the need for LBB to learn lessons from successful library services elsewhere (the Idea Stores in Tower Hamlets for example). Further, one staff member went to far as to propose *“one library service for London. With the size of the cuts, that option is starting to make more sense”*.
- 2.121 The prospect of raising council tax was discussed in some focus groups and drop-in sessions, with a small minority at the former and significantly more at the latter supporting an increase to support retaining (or indeed improving) the library service. Participants at all three deliberative events and some written submissions also felt that a council tax increase should have been presented as an option, which would in turn have changed the underlying arithmetic of the budget and need for savings.
- 2.122 It should be noted that several lengthy written submissions were received (from the East Finchley Library Users’ Group, Mill Hill Preservation Society, Mill Hill Residents’ Association, Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum and an individual resident) outlining some specific alternative proposals both generally and for specific libraries. These have been replicated in summary form in the main report of findings.

Other issues – availability of volunteers

- 2.123 Around a third (34%) of panellists stated that they would be interested in volunteering to help with activities in Barnet libraries, compared with just under a quarter (23%) of open questionnaire respondents.
- 2.124 20% of panellists and 15% of main questionnaire respondents said they would be interested in helping to run a community library.
- 2.125 The text comments provided by respondents also showed some scepticism about whether an appropriate number of volunteers could be recruited and retained.

Other issues – the consultation process

- 2.126 There was a great deal of mistrust in the both the consultation process and the regard decision-makers will pay to its outcomes across all research methodologies.
- 2.127 The consultation document and questionnaire were heavily criticised by drop-in attendees, staff participants and in several written submissions. The questionnaire in particular was thought to be leading, over-complicated, over-lengthy and off-putting (deliberately so to engineer the ‘desired’ result

according to some). Staff also raised concerns about the construction of the questionnaire which, in their view, was ‘loaded’, ‘disingenuous’ and ‘ambiguous’.

- 2.128 Similar views were expressed by many who responded to the quantitative elements and provided further comments. There were accusations of bias (particularly around some of the ranking questions used e.g. not being able to express a view that all options were equally inappropriate) and predetermination.
- 2.129 Participants at the deliberative events felt that many in the borough do not trust that the Council is acting sincerely in this consultation - and complained of a lack of mutual trust that is preventing a collaborative approach to creating a workable model for the future. It was also felt that low levels of trust tend to limit debate and encourage residents to take a defensive stance and argue for the status quo, mainly because they fear any change will be used as an opportunity to diminish the service rather than increase its impact.
- 2.130 This was echoed to some extent by drop-in attendees and in some written submissions: it was suggested that the ‘options exercise’ is a missed opportunity to create a way forward with the community, show the potential benefits of change and ask for assistance in achieving it. Indeed, there was a definite sense that there would be value moving forward in greater collaboration between the Council and its communities in determining an acceptable future model for the library service.
- 2.131 Finally, drop-in attendees strongly desired more detail about the three options; they were frustrated with the unclear criteria underpinning them and with not being able to see what they considered to be essential data to allow an informed judgement. They particularly desired further knowledge of: costs; library usage and income generation; the mix of services that would be provided within the proposed smaller libraries; the financial implications of the three proposed options; and how the options were chosen.

Introduction to the Full Report

- 2.132 What follows is ORS’s main report of findings, which considers the feedback received through each of the different consultation elements and provides a comprehensive evidence base to help inform the decision-making process for LBB. We recognise that considering the feedback from each element of the consultation in turn can at times be repetitive given that similar issues often emerged across the different strands – but it is important that this full report provides an accurate reflection of all of the feedback received.
- 2.133 Any verbatim quotations (in italics) are used not because we agree or disagree with them – but for their vividness in capturing recurrent points of view. ORS does not endorse the statements made, but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly.

Need for interpretation

- 2.134 In terms of the quantitative strands, it is also important to note the following:

- » **The weighted panel survey is *broadly* representative of the overall population of Barnet, and therefore is likely to be a useful guide to overall public opinion across the borough. Respondents to the survey are referred to as ‘panellists’ throughout this report**

- » **The open questionnaire can provide considerable information about the views of particular groups and individuals at more local levels (including those of many users of the library service); but may be less appropriate as a guide to overall opinion because its response profile does not match the Barnet population (by over- and under-representing particular demographic groups relative to the actual population). Respondents to the questionnaire are referred to as ‘respondents’ throughout this report.**

- 2.135 Although the open questionnaire is an important and accessible consultation route that is open to everyone, it was distributed unsystematically. Therefore, it is unsurprising, but important, that the main questionnaire achieved responses that are somewhat less representative of residents living in the borough than the more representative panel survey. For example, while certain groups are over- and under-represented in both returned samples (e.g. younger people are under-represented), the weighting process used in the panel survey corrects for this over- and under-representation, to ensure that the contribution each group makes to the overall result is in line with the overall profile of the wider Barnet population.
- 2.136 Because its respondent profile is an imperfect reflection of the population, the results of the main questionnaire have to be interpreted carefully and compared with the weighted panel survey findings (hence the Executive Summary summarises the key results for both). However, the open questionnaire results do provide an important indication of where there may be particular strength of feeling in relation to the proposals.

Note

- 2.137 A number of questions in the main questionnaire asked respondents to identify how much they supported or opposed particular proposals. The scale used was changed a short time into the fieldwork period, with a ‘Tend to oppose’ option replacing the original ‘Do not support’ for online respondents, to ensure a more balanced scale that was easy for respondents to understand.
- 2.138 In the main body of the report, ORS has presented results from before and after this change separately, to allow for any incomparability between the original and revised questions which would make it inappropriate to present a single, aggregated result. In the main, however, the results from before and after the change generally show a generally similar picture.
- 2.139 For conciseness, throughout this executive summary, when summarising results for affected questions from the main questionnaire, the percentages quoted refer only to results *after* the change was made (on the basis that the substantial majority of individuals – 1,209 of the 1,343 online respondents, and all 848 postal respondents - responded to the revised version of the questions). Percentages quoted for unaffected questions are based on all the responses received.
- 2.140 Readers are encouraged to consult the full body of the report in order to see separate results for early (prior to the change) online respondents.

3. Introduction to the Quantitative Consultation Elements

Overview of the consultation questionnaires

Overview

- 3.1 As part of its Libraries consultation, a consultation document covering the proposed changes was produced by LBB and made available to residents, staff and organisations.
- 3.2 A main consultation questionnaire was also developed by LBB, which was split into three sections. Section One included questions on the following key topics:
 - » Outcomes and objectives
 - » What could change?
 - » Library opening times
 - » Relocation and redevelopment of library sites
 - » Generating income
 - » Alternative delivery models
 - » Specific library services
 - » Options
 - » Volunteering
- 3.3 Section Two was targeted towards both users and non-users of the library service, with separate parts as follows:
 - » Current library users
 - » People who do not use the library service
 - » Both users and non-users
- 3.4 Section Three (‘About You’) captured information about the type of response being submitted, as well as a diversity monitoring section to collect respondents’ demographic information.
- 3.5 The online **main questionnaire** was setup by LBB and made available on 10th November 2014 via the Engage Barnet online portal remained available until the consultation period ended on 22nd February 2015. A paper version of the questionnaire was subsequently made available upon request in the borough’s libraries, for individuals who were unable to fill in the questionnaire online. In total, 2,191 responses were obtained.

- 3.6 LBB also surveyed the views of its **citizens’ panel** – a broadly representative group of around 2,000 local residents who are regularly invited to provide their views about local services – by distributing copies of the questionnaire to panellists for them to complete either by post or online. This yielded 602 responses.
- 3.7 Following the conclusion of the consultation period, LBB provided ORS with the data for the online questionnaires and the paper copies of the main questionnaire, in order that these could be independently processed, analysed and reported.
- 3.8 In terms of the quantitative elements, ORS’ role is to detail the response to the various quantitative strands, and the results for each are reported separately in detail in the chapters which follow. In terms of these different elements, it is important to note the following:
- » **The panel survey is *broadly* representative of the overall population of Barnet, and therefore is likely to be a useful guide to overall public opinion across the borough.**
 - » **The open questionnaires can provide considerable information about the views of particular groups and individuals at very local levels; but are less appropriate as a guide to overall opinion because their response profiles do not match the Barnet population.**
- 3.9 The various sets of results which follow should therefore be considered within these specific contexts. Although the open questionnaire is an important and accessible consultation route that is open to everyone, it was distributed unsystematically. Therefore, it is unsurprising, but important, that the main questionnaire achieved responses that are somewhat less representative of residents living in the locality of the centre than the more representative panel survey.
- 3.10 Because its respondent profile is an imperfect reflection of the population, the results of the main questionnaire have to be interpreted carefully and compared with the panel survey findings. However, the open questionnaire results do provide an important indication of where there may be particular strength or feeling in relation to the proposals.
- 3.11 Of course, it is for the London Borough of Barnet (not ORS) to determine the emphasis to be given to the open questionnaire in comparison with the panel survey and other consultation elements, while bearing in mind that the outcome of the consultation should not be just a ‘numbers’ game. In other words, the question is not *‘Which findings should determine our decision?’* but *‘What evidence or considerations have emerged that should influence our deliberations about the future of the libraries service?’*

Summary of key findings from the panel survey and main questionnaire

- 3.12 It is strongly apparent that many respondents care very deeply about libraries, and feel that libraries play a vitally important role in their local community.
- 3.13 However, many respondents foresee that the proposed options could have a serious negative impact on the service. The **results to the open questionnaire show significant opposition to the three options**, as well as to certain principles underpinning these options e.g. proposals to reduce the size of libraries, proposals for unstaffed opening, and proposals to close libraries.

- 3.14 In contrast, **the more representative panel survey results show more support for the three options**, and it is also the case that **panellists tend to be more supportive** of the various ideas proposed in general.
- 3.15 For example, **majorities of panellists support all but one of the seven proposals for relocation and redevelopment**, whereas **none of these is supported by a majority of questionnaire respondents**. Panellists are also far more likely than the open questionnaire respondents to express a view that they would be confident about using an unstaffed library.
- 3.16 Nonetheless, there are **certain similarities in the results across the two strands**. For example, both strands show somewhat more support for Option 1 than the other two options, even if the majority of main questionnaire respondents opposed this. **Both panellists and respondents are also largely supportive of the proposals about maintaining specific library services**.
- 3.17 Furthermore, **across both the strands**, significant majorities support libraries being run directly by the Council, and **majorities oppose the closure of libraries and the reduction of library space** (although this is somewhat at odds with the finding that majorities of panellists expressed support for the three options, which would entail closures and space reductions).
- 3.18 It is also worth pointing out that, within the results to the panel survey, there is some difference in views between those who identify themselves as current users of the library service, and those who do not. Panellists who are current library users tend to be *less supportive* of many of the proposals when their views are compared with those of panellists who do not use the service; however, these panellists also tend to be *more supportive* when their views are compared with those of respondents to the main questionnaire (the vast majority of whom identified themselves as users of the service).

Other questionnaires

- 3.19 In order to understand the specific views of particular groups – some of whom may not have been able to access the main questionnaire – LBB also produced separate variations of the consultation questionnaire as follows:
- “Easy Read” questionnaire (2 responses)
 - User groups questionnaire (20 responses);
 - Staff questionnaire (88 responses);
 - Young people’s questionnaire (47 responses);
 - Children’s questionnaire (51 responses).
- 3.20 Each of these elements has been reported separately. Due to much lower response numbers, most of the strands have been reported in a more summary format compared with the panel survey and the main questionnaire.

Total responses received

- 3.21 LBB received 2,399 responses to the open quantitative elements (2,191 responses to the main questionnaire, and a further 208 responses to the smaller, targeted questionnaires) and a further 602 responses to the closed panel survey – an overall total of 3,001 questionnaire responses.

Interpretation of data

- 3.22 The results which follow are presented in a largely graphical format. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making relevant responses.
- 3.23 Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with a ‘traffic light’ system in which green shades represent positive responses, red shades represent negative responses, and beige and purple shades represent neither positive nor negative responses.
- 3.24 The bolder shades are used to highlight responses at the ‘extremes’, for example, strongly agree or strongly disagree.
- 3.25 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of “don’t know” categories, or multiple answers. Throughout the volume an asterisk (*) denotes any value less than half of one per cent. In some cases figures of 2% or below have been excluded from graphs.
- 3.26 All open-ended responses to the main questionnaire and the panel survey have been classified, using a standardised code frame based on the main themes arising from the comments. This is done to so that the very large numbers of comments made can be usefully summarised, by identifying the key themes raised by respondents and quantifying the numbers of respondents who make specific points. Due to the lower numbers of comments made, the open-ended responses to the smaller questionnaires have been summarised more qualitatively rather than being coded.
- 3.27 In particular, the staff questionnaire generated a number of detailed and well-evidenced further comments which have been summarised in the relevant chapter.

4. Panel survey

Overview of the citizens' panel survey

- 4.1 LBB established its citizens' panel in 1997 to give Barnet residents a chance to influence life in the borough and let the council know the things that are important to them in their area. Residents living in Barnet are selected at random and given the opportunity to become panel members.
- 4.2 The panel currently has a total membership of around 2,000 local residents, and this membership is intended to be broadly representative of the overall Barnet population.

Survey response

- 4.3 The main questionnaire was distributed to all 2,009 panellists in 30/01/2015, with panellists invited to complete the questionnaire - either by post or online - by no later than 22/02/2015. A total of 250 postal and 352 online responses were received; the overall response rate was therefore 30%.

Weighting the Data

- 4.4 The extent to which results can be generalised from a sample depends on how well the sample represents the population from which it is drawn. As for all surveys of this type, although panellists are selected at random and the panel is broadly representative of the wider population, the achieved sample was unbalanced owing to non-response.
- 4.5 Under these circumstances, inferences about the views of the population can be improved by calculating weights for any under or over-sampling of particular groups. Weights are assigned by comparing the sample proportions for particular groups with known population characteristics from other sources for the same groups. Each observation is then multiplied by its weight to ensure that the weighted sample will conform to the known population characteristics.
- 4.6 The returned sample was checked against comparative data for age, gender, ethnic group, tenure, working status and ward, then subsequently weighted by age, tenure, ethnic group, gender and ward.
- 4.7 The results of the panel survey are therefore likely to be more representative of the views of the wider population than those of the open questionnaire.
- 4.8 The tables that appear without commentary on the following two pages show the unweighted and weighted profiles of the responses to the survey. (Please note that the figures may not always sum to 100% due to rounding).

Figure 2: Panel survey responses (unweighted and weighted) and Resident Population

Characteristic	Unweighted Count	Unweighted Valid %	Weighted Valid %	Resident Population %
BY AGE				
18 to 34	94	15.6%	34.7%	33.1%
35 to 44	101	16.8%	21.0%	19.4%
45 to 54	126	20.9%	16.6%	17.0%
55 to 64	113	18.8%	11.6%	12.4%
65 or over	168	27.9%	16.1%	18.0%
Total valid responses	602	100%	100%	100%
BY GENDER				
Male	279	46.3%	46.3%	47.9%
Female	323	53.7%	53.7%	52.1%
Total valid responses	602	100%	100%	100%
BY WORKING STATUS				
Working	365	60.6%	64.1%	61.9%
Retired	159	26.4%	16.2%	16.3%
Otherwise not working	78	13.0%	19.6%	21.9%
Total valid responses	602	100%	100%	100%
BY TENURE				
Owner occupied (including shared ownership)	492	83.1%	61.0%	59.5%
Rent privately	64	10.8%	26.9%	26.9%
Rent from Council or HA	36	6.1%	12.2%	13.6%
Total valid responses	592	100%	100%	100%
<i>Not known</i>	10	-	-	-
BY ETHNIC GROUP				
White	464	77.1%	68.9%	66.5%
Non-white	138	22.9%	31.1%	33.5%
Total valid responses	602	100%	100%	100%
BY DISABILITY				
Yes	86	14.4%	11.7%	-
No	512	85.6%	88.3%	-
Total valid responses	598	100%	100%	-
<i>Not known</i>	4	-	-	-

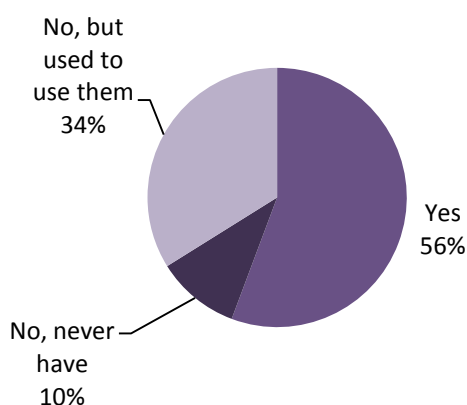
Main findings

Outcomes and objectives

Do you use Barnet’s library service?

- 4.9 More than half of panellists (56%) identified themselves as users of Barnet’s library service.
- 4.10 A further 34% had used Barnet’s libraries in the past, while a tenth of panellists (10%) had never used the libraries.

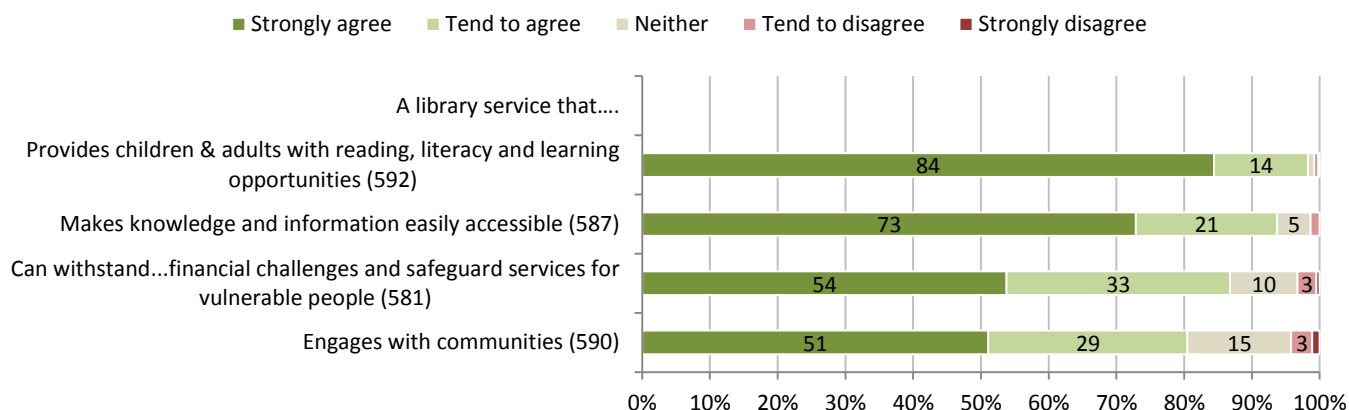
Figure 3: Whether respondents use Barnet’s library service (Base: 599)



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these objectives?

- 4.11 At least four fifths of panellists agreed with each of the objectives. In particular, more than nine out of ten agreed with the objectives for:
- *A library service that provides children and adults with reading, literacy and learning opportunities (98%); and*
 - *A library service that makes knowledge and information easily accessible (94%).*
- 4.12 While slightly fewer panellists agreed with the remaining objectives, the vast majority were still supportive of these:
- *A library service that can withstand current and future financial challenges and safeguard services for vulnerable people (87%);*
 - *A library service that engages with communities (80%).*

Figure 4: Levels of agreement and disagreement with the four objectives (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Do you have any other comments to make about these objectives?

- 4.13 The text comments from the panel survey were collated using the same code frame that had been developed based on the comments from the main questionnaire.
- 4.14 Please note that percentages are based on how many panellists made a particular comment, as a proportion of all panellists who made valid comments i.e. panellists who did not provide any comments are excluded from the calculations. Percentages are based on weighted counts.
- 4.15 The comments were very widely spread over a variety of themes, although the views which were most commonly expressed were:
- Libraries need to have qualified staff and/or staff are vital for libraries (e.g. because they provide help, advice and information, and they are particularly valuable to elderly residents) (11%);
 - Library facilities are vital for children for educational purposes (e.g. in terms of encouraging them to interact and learn to read from a young age) (9%);
 - Broad agreement with the objectives in general (9%).

Figure 5: Further comments about objectives (Base: 77 panellists who provided comments)

Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Libraries need to have qualified staff/staff are vital for libraries/helping with needs/giving advice/information/engaging with people, especially the elderly	11.0
Library facilities are vital for children for educational purposes/children interacting with each other/libraries are there to encourage children to read from a young age	9.3
Generally agree /they are a good idea	8.9
Libraries are a vital service for the community/community engagement	8.5
Libraries are vital for people without facilities/people that don't have access to computers/books etc. /from low income or deprived areas	7.7
Need to improve/extend opening hours/times of libraries	5.9
Disagree with the closure of libraries/should keep libraries open	5.8

Councils should be responsibility to provide these services/make these decisions	4.9
Libraries should provide space for increased activities/facilities i.e. community meetings/book clubs etc. /increasing activities will bring more people/money to the library	4.4
Prepared to change with the times/more relevant technology for libraries/upgrade current systems	4.3
Libraries are important local facilities/they should be kept as they are	3.7
Libraries are vital for the public to be able to access information easily	3.4
Questionnaire is biased/questions are leading/otherwise unhappy with consultation	2.9
Libraries are vital for elderly people/will impact negatively on elderly people/provides a place for them to go/interact with other people	2.9
Don't understand the information/questions/objectives aren't clear	2.9
It is not the councils responsibility/concern to be safeguarding vulnerable people/it is not the libraries' responsibility/it is social services' responsibility	2.6
Reduce charges within libraries/remove late fees	2.5
Don't agree with the 4th option/against the 4th option	2.5
Libraries need to have local access/better access i.e. libraries need to be more central/closer etc.	2.0
The library service is a priority/savings can be made elsewhere/increase funds for library/increased investment needed	1.9
Disagree with the use volunteers/shouldn't use the volunteer sector as standards won't be adequate	1.3
Libraries are vital for education/getting adults to further education/should provide educational classes for adults/encourage adults to read etc.	1.2
Libraries need to be free/libraries should always be free	1.1
The proposals won't meet these objectives/they won't work	0.9
Disagree with unstaffed library/ I am too vulnerable for libraries to be unmanned/no machines need well trained professional staff	0.8
Update existing libraries/invest and develop current libraries/no cuts	0.8
Increase council tax/tax richer people/businesses to fund libraries	0.8
Need a better range/variety of stock i.e. up to date books/DVDs etc./shouldn't reduce range of books	0.6
Libraries already provide a good space for activities/groups/meetings etc.	0.5
It is vital that the council safeguard services for vulnerable groups	0.4
Other	30.6

What could change?

To what extent do you support or oppose the following approaches to help save money?

4.16 The following proposals were supported by at least half of the panellists:

- Using volunteers to enhance the services provided by paid staff (85%);
- Community run libraries (73%);
- Unstaffed opening, using technology to extend opening hours (59%).

4.17 The remaining approaches were opposed by the majority. In particular, no more than three out of ten supported:

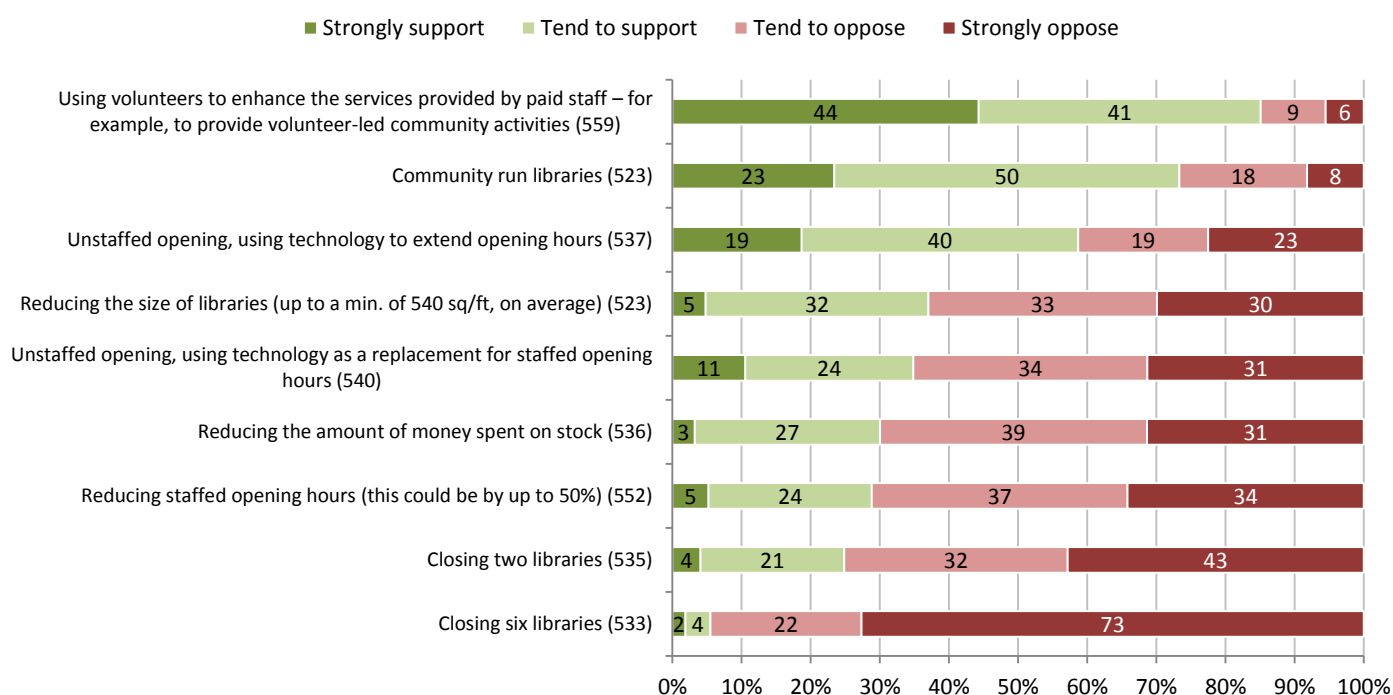
- Closing six libraries (6%);
- Closing two libraries (25%);

- Reducing staffed opening hours (by up to 50%) (29%);
- Reducing the amount of money spent on stock (30%).

4.18 Although most panellists supported unstaffed opening, using technology as a means to *extend* opening hours; far fewer supported the proposal that this technology should be used to *replace* staffed opening (35%).

4.19 Reducing the size of libraries (to a minimum of 540 square feet on average) was also opposed by the majority of panellists (only 37% in support).

Figure 6: Levels of support and opposition for the proposed approaches to save money (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



4.20 It is worth noting that there were differences between the views of those panellists who identified themselves as current users of the library service, and those who said that they did not currently use it (although some of these panellists had used the service in the past).

4.21 The most notable examples of these differing levels of support are outlined below:

- Unstaffed opening, using technology to extend opening hours (48% of users supportive; 72% of non-users supportive);
- Closing two libraries (15% of users; 37% of non-users);
- Reducing the size of libraries (27% of users; 49% of non-users);
- Community run libraries (67% of users; 82% of non-users);
- Reducing staffed opening hours (22% of users; 37% of non-users).

Do you have any other comments to make about these approaches to help save money? If you don't support any of these approaches please say why.

4.22 The comments were very widely spread over a variety of themes, although the views which were most commonly expressed were:

- Disagreement with closures or cuts within the library service; libraries should be kept as they are (11%);
- Disagreement with unstaffed libraries in general (7%);
- Disagreement with the use of technology as a replacement for staff (7%);
- Libraries are important for the local community e.g. in terms of providing space for facilities, activities etc. (7%);
- Libraries need to be staffed with professional/qualified individuals who can provide face-to-face contact (7%).

Figure 7: Further comments about proposed approaches to save money (Base: 152 panellists who provided comments)

Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Don't want closures within library service/keep libraries as they are/do not want any cuts in library service	10.7
Generally disagree with unstaffed libraries	7.3
Disagree with the use of technology/it should not replace staff/cannot run library solely with technology	7.1
Libraries are important for local community/provide community space for facilities/activities etc.	6.7
Keep libraries staffed/need professional/qualified staff/provide advice/face to face contact	6.7
Agree with the use of volunteers as long as it is alongside existing library facilities/it should be additional to current service/not replacing	6.3
Increase revenue by renting out library space for other services i.e. evening classes/reading groups etc.	5.5
Libraries need good/better variety of stock	5.4
Increase revenue by renting out library space to businesses i.e. cafe/shops etc.	5.0
Libraries are important for education/providing facilities for people to learn	4.7
I wouldn't use unstaffed libraries/unstaffed libraries would not be safe/secure	4.0
Generally disagree with reducing space/540 sq ft is too small	3.8
Agree with the use of technology as long as it is alongside existing library facilities/it should be additional to current service/not replacing	3.7
Disagree with the use of volunteers/libraries need qualified/properly trained staff	3.1
Councils should properly fund libraries/should invest in libraries	2.2
Reduce amount of stock to save money/sell off stock to make money	2.1
Increase council tax to keep library services/willing to pay more council tax for library services	2.0
Libraries are important for children/getting children to enjoy a love of books	1.8
Libraries should form partnerships with businesses/seek corporate sponsorships	1.8
Agree with the use of volunteers/prefer libraries using volunteers than machines	1.7
Concerns that unstaffed libraries would be targeted by criminals i.e. problems relating to theft of books/computers/vandalism etc.	1.6
Reduce number of staff/employ less staff to save money	1.6
Cut high paid salaries/councillors' expenses etc./use money for the libraries	1.2

Savings should be made elsewhere	1.2
Disagree with reduction in opening times/hours	1.1
Libraries need to be within a reasonable distance/easy access needed to library	1.0
Generally disagree with proposals/bad idea	0.9
Generally agree with reducing space	0.9
Not enough detail given/need more information on proposals	0.9
Reduce opening times/hours to save money	0.8
Libraries are important for elderly/vulnerable/disabled people in the area/provides them with access to local facilities	0.8
Introduce minimal charges to libraries/happy to pay small charges/could introduce annual membership fees/joining fees etc.	0.6
Libraries are important for people in deprived area/people who are in most need	0.6
Unstaffed libraries will eventually lead to closures for libraries/proposals will lead to closures	0.2
Other	31.3

Library opening times

On which days of the week do you think it is most important for libraries to be staffed?

At which times of day do you think it is most important for libraries to be staffed?

- 4.23 The questionnaire asked respondents to identify when they would most like libraries to be staffed, by inviting them to rank the days of the week and different times of day in order of importance.
- 4.24 ORS also notes that the questionnaire did not ask respondents to rank specific combinations of times and days of the week, and this should also be considered when considering the results. For example, certain opening times might have been seen as more appropriate for the working week, while others might have been seen as most appropriate for weekends.
- 4.25 Saturday achieved the most first preferences, followed by Monday. Sunday was ranked seventh (i.e. least important) by more than two fifths of panellists; however, it also achieved more second preferences than any other day of the week.
- 4.26 More than a quarter of panellists selected 10am-12pm and 4pm-6pm as the most important times of day, although 6pm-8pm and 12pm-2pm achieved the most second preferences. In general there was much less support at the two ‘extremes’, with before 10am and after 8pm most likely to be ranked sixth or seventh.

Figure 8: Importance of libraries being staffed on different days

On what days of the week do you think it is most important for libraries to be staffed?		Day of week						
		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
OVERALL		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Rank	1 – most important	20.7	2.6	1.3	0.7	3.9	59.2	11.7
	2	11.8	14.8	8.4	4.1	20.4	11.9	28.5
	3	14.9	12.6	20.5	10.2	27.8	7.1	6.9
	4	11.3	17.6	22.2	38.5	6.9	1.6	1.8
	5	4.1	22.2	33.0	17.7	17.6	2.8	2.6
	6	15.0	21.1	8.6	17.4	11.8	13.7	12.5
	7 – least important	20.1	4.9	3.2	5.6	13.0	9.0	44.2

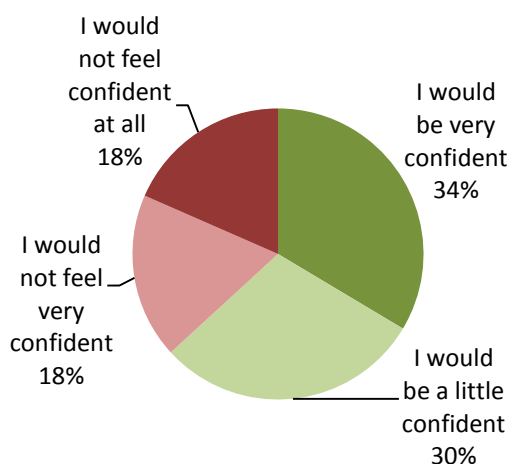
Figure 9: Importance of libraries being staffed at different times.

At what times of day do you think it is most important for libraries to be staffed?		Time						
		Earlier than 10am	10am-12pm	12pm-2pm	2pm-4pm	4pm-6pm	6pm-8pm	After 8pm
OVERALL		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Rank	1 – most important	11.6	27.3	8.5	5.4	25.4	17.8	4.1
	2	6.1	15.6	17.5	14.2	14.4	26.9	5.4
	3	7.1	12.0	24.9	24.5	14.4	10.2	6.9
	4	6.0	9.9	18.2	31.1	23.6	8.3	2.9
	5	7.6	15.3	20.3	14.7	16.2	19.6	6.3
	6	21.9	17.0	8.2	5.8	3.4	20.2	23.5
	7 – least important	35.8	3.4	1.9	0.9	1.9	0.8	55.3

In terms of using an unstaffed library, which of the following statements applies most closely to you?

- 4.27 Around a third of panellists (34%) said they would be very confident in terms of using an unstaffed library, with a similar proportion (30%) saying they would be a little confident.
- 4.28 Of the remaining panellists, 18% would not feel very confident and the same proportion would not feel confident at all.

Figure 10: Extent to which respondents would feel confident about using an unstaffed library (Base: 558)



What would increase the likelihood of you using an unstaffed library?

- 4.29 Panellists were asked what would encourage them to use an unstaffed library. Two options (volunteers on site and help learning how to use self-service) were provided, and there was also an opportunity for panellists to identify 'other' things that would encourage them to use an unstaffed library.
- 4.30 Nearly three quarters (73%) indicated that having volunteers on-site would encourage them to use an unstaffed library, and around two fifths (41%) indicated that they would be encouraged by help learning how to use self-service.
- 4.31 Relatively few panellists provided 'other' suggestions, and of these the most commonly raised points related to the need for additional security measures, or the inadequacy of CCTV as a security measure (4%).

Figure 11: Comments about what would increase the likelihood of using an unstaffed library (Base: 524 panellists)

Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Volunteers on site	72.7
Help learning how to use self-service	40.9
Additional security measures would be needed i.e. security guards etc./CCTV is an inadequate security measure to be a deterrent	3.7
Staff are vital for libraries/Having staff is only thing that would encourage me to use libraries	1.9
Nothing/nothing would encourage me to use unstaffed libraries	1.1
Libraries need to be staffed for security reason/ feel safer in a manned library/would not be confident/they would not be safe/secure	1.1
Generally disagree with unstaffed libraries/don't think it will work	1.0
Staff are vital for giving advice/information/knowledge of books/staff should be paid/trained/professional	0.6
Disagree with the use of volunteers/shouldn't use the volunteer sector as standards won't be adequate/volunteers devalue the skills of a librarian	0.4
Easy instructions needed for use of equipment/computers	0.1
Staff are vital for engaging with people especially elderly/gives a personal touch	0.1
Longer/better opening hours/times	0.1
Other	3.1

Do you have any other comments to make about these approaches to staffing and opening times?

- 4.32 Around a fifth of panellists who commented felt that libraries need to be staffed for security reasons, or that they would feel safer in a staffed library/less safe in an unstaffed library (22%).
- 4.33 Similar proportions felt that CCTV alone was an inadequate security measure (11%) and that staff are vital for libraries (helping with needs, engaging with the elderly etc.) (11%). A tenth (10%) were concerned that unstaffed libraries could be targeted by criminals.

Figure 12: Further comments about proposed approaches to staffing and opening times (Base: 170 panellists who provided comments)

Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Libraries need to be staffed for security reasons/ feel safer in a manned library/Wouldn't use unstaffed libraries/they wouldn't be safe/secure	21.5
CCTV is an inadequate security measure to be a deterrent/additional security measures would be needed i.e. security guards etc.	11.0
Staff are vital for libraries/helping with needs/ engaging with people especially elderly/give a personal touch	10.6
Concerns that unstaffed libraries would be targeted by criminals i.e. problems relating to theft of books/computers/vandalism etc.	10.0
Libraries should have staff who know the library/ who can give advice/information/offer professionalism/help and assistance	8.4
Generally disagree with unstaffed libraries/don't think it will work	8.2
Agree with the use of volunteers/should explore using volunteers to help cut costs for libraries	7.2
Against limiting opening hours/different people use libraries at different times/need range of days and times	6.7
There should be a combination of full time staff and volunteer staff	5.1
We should have both staff and self-service/ a combination of the two/ good idea but only outside core operational hours/only staff at peak times	4.2
It is not cost effective/ the savings will be minimal/If you're paying for CCTV and security you may as well pay staff	3.6
We need someone to be present to offer technical support	3.2
Not happy using self-service/Can't be reliant on self-serving machines due to mechanical failures/concerns about using self-service/others may not be able to manage using them	3.1
Disagree with the use of volunteers/shouldn't use the volunteer sector as standards won't be adequate/volunteers devalue the skills of a librarian	2.4
Your proposals will stop people going to the library, justifying future closures	1.9
Questionnaire is biased/questions are leading/otherwise unhappy with consultation	1.9
Generally agree with unstaffed libraries/think it will work	1.9
I disagree with downsizing libraries/don't want any libraries to close	0.7
Happy to use self- service machines/more efficient	0.7
Staff are vital to maintain order/quiet/ need to be present when there are children there/maintain discipline with children	0.4
Keep the staff/there are not enough staff as it is/loss of jobs would negatively impact Barnet	0.4
Other	33.5

Relocation and development of library sites

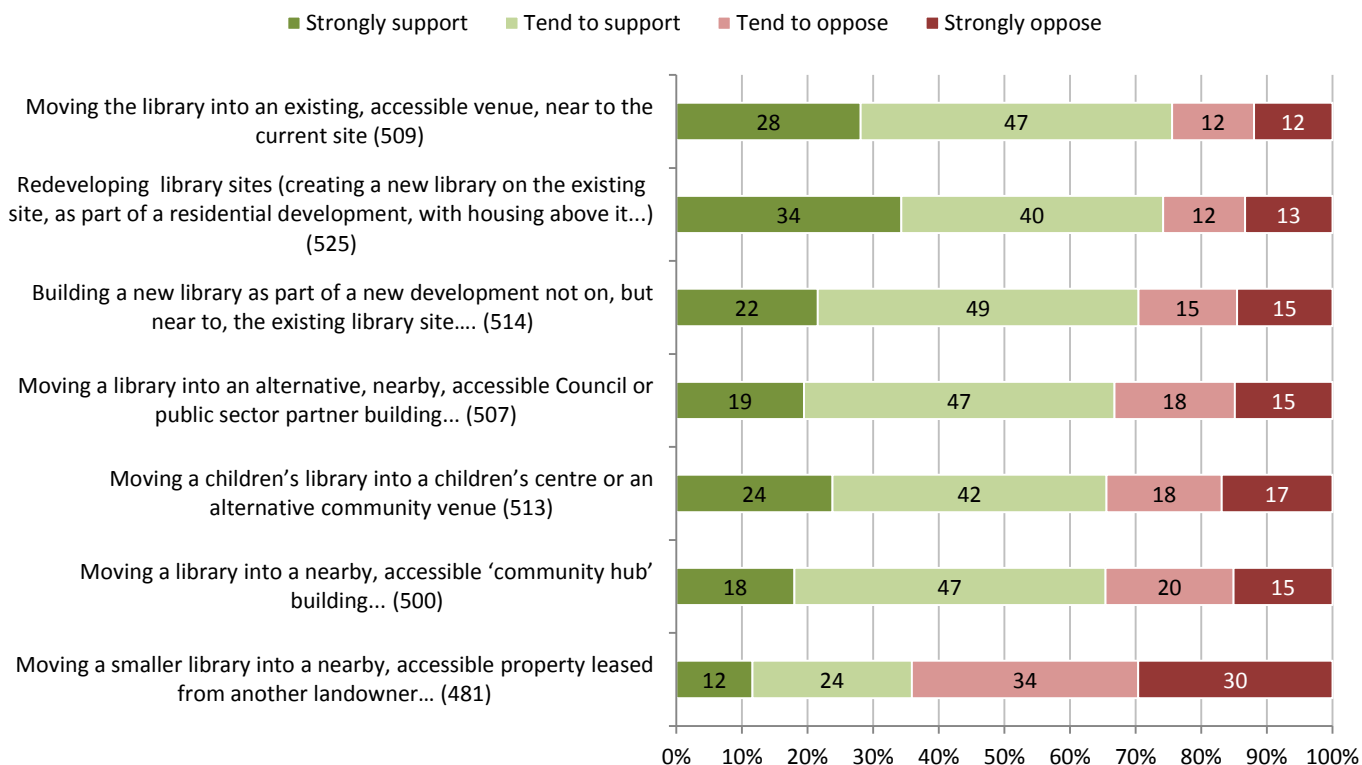
To what extent do you support or oppose the following relocation and redevelopment opportunities?

4.34 All but one of the relocation and redevelopment opportunities are supported by the majority of panellists. The three with the most support were:

- Redeveloping library sites (creating a new library on the existing site, as part of a residential development, with housing above it – an opportunity to create a more accessible, fit for purpose library building) (76%)
- Moving the library into an existing, accessible venue, near to the current site (74%);
- Building a new library as part of a new development not on, but near to, the existing site (70%).

4.35 However, only 36% support moving a smaller library into a nearby, accessible property leased from another landowner.

Figure 13: Levels of support and opposition for the relocation and redevelopment proposals (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



4.36 There were again some differences by library use; for example: 72% of non-users supported a children’s library being moved into a children’s centre or alternative community venue, compared with 60% of current library users.

To what extent do you support or oppose the following relocation and redevelopment opportunities?

- 4.37 Just over a fifth of panellists who provided further comments felt the libraries should be left as they are, or that they are already in appropriate locations (22%).
- 4.38 Around a tenth (11%) felt the proposals would not be cost effective, either because it would cost money to move, the money saved would not be significant, or it would effectively waste recent investment in the libraries.
- 4.39 The same proportion provided comments about how they would not want a separate library for children (i.e. moved into a community centre).

Figure 14: Further comments about relocation and redevelopment proposals (Base: 118 panellists who provided comments)

Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Leave the libraries as they are/do not move libraries/already in good locations that meet needs of community/do not close libraries	21.7
These proposal will create more cost/moving these libraries will create more cost/invested so much into these libraries already/savings will not be enough	10.8
Do not want separate library for children/meaning parent would have to go to two different libraries	10.8
New library locations will need good access i.e. car parking facilities	4.8
Libraries should be within reasonable distance/walking distance	4.4
Do not want relocated or redeveloped libraries if they are smaller	3.4
Private developers/landlords/companies will profit from this/move towards privatisation	2.6
Generally disagree with proposals/bad idea/will not work	2.4
This is a move towards closing libraries/libraries will not re-open when they close	2.1
Generally agree with proposals/good idea/think they will work	1.6
Not enough detail/information given on proposals	1.2
Do not agree as promises have not been kept with regards to Totteridge library/proposed to be reopened and still has not	1.1
Increase council tax to cover costs of libraries	1.0
Utilise space within library for cafe/coffee shop facilities	1.0
Do not close/relocate Chipping Barnet library	0.7
Do not close/relocate Burnt Oak library	0.5
Do not close/relocate Edgware library	0.5
Proposals are financially motivated/detrimental to services/oppose further cuts	0.4
Do not close/relocate East Finchley library	0.4
Other	57.1

Generating income

To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following proposals for generating income to help maintain and improve the library service?

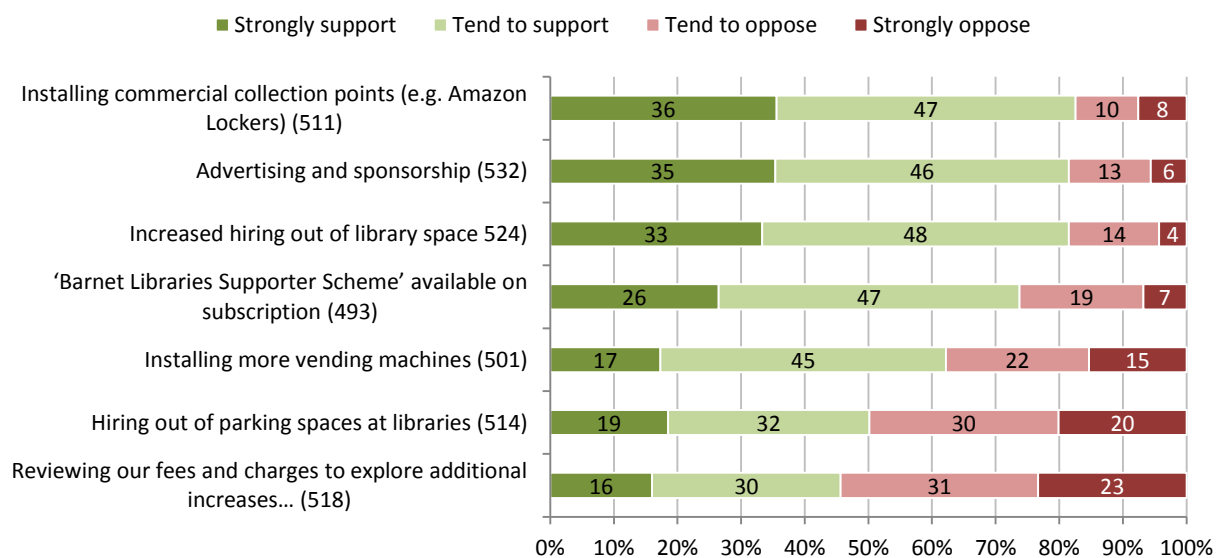
- 4.40 At least four fifths of panellists support the following income generation proposals:
- Installing commercial collection points (e.g. Amazon Lockers) (83%);

- Advertising and sponsorship (82%);
- Increased hiring out of library space (82%).

4.41 Only one proposal was supported by less than half of panellists:

- Reviewing our fees and charges to explore additional increases, including the introduction of fines for children’s stock (46%);

Figure 15: Levels of support and opposition for the income generation proposals (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



4.42 On the whole, slightly higher proportions of non-users than users tended to be supportive, although these differences were less marked compared with some of the other questions asked.

Do you have any other comments or alternative proposals for increasing income for the library service?

4.43 Just over a fifth of panellists who provided further comments agreed with the increased hiring out of library space for more event and activities (22%).

4.44 More than a tenth suggested:

- The introduction of minimal charges, including library fees and joining fees (11%);
- Opening a coffee shop within a library to increase revenue, including a partnership with a high street chain or franchise (10%).

Figure 16: Further comments about income generation proposals (Base: 102 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Agree with increased hiring out of library space/could rent cheap space out for more events/activities/as long as it doesn't mean worse quality of library services	21.8
Introduce minimal charges to libraries/happy to pay small charges/could introduce annual membership fees/joining fees etc./happy to pay more for fines as long as it doesn't affect people who can't afford it	10.6
Need to open a coffee shop within library to bring in increased revenue/form partnership with Costa coffee for example	10.2
Disagree you should introduce fines for children/may discourage children to read/borrow books/may affect children in deprived areas	9.0
Disagree with hiring out parking spaces/this will cause less space for people who actually want to use library/may cause issues relating to disabled parking spaces/need more parking spaces not less	8.0
Disagree with proposed installation of more vending machines/vending machines are too unhealthy i.e. sugary/fatty foods etc.	7.5
I don't think libraries should be run like a business	5.2
Increase council tax to keep library services	3.9
Agree with commercial collection points/commercial partnerships/think it is a good idea/could provide increased revenue	3.0
Libraries need to be kept free/could alienate some users who wouldn't be able to afford it	2.6
Libraries should be properly funded/funded by the government to be kept running as they are	2.4
Agree you should introduce fine for children/stop people abusing the system	2.4
Introduce activities/events/educational classes within library/could charge small amount to increase library revenue	2.2
Disagree with advertising and sponsorship/don't want advertising all over the library	2.2
Don't agree with charging more for fines/additional charges/may deter some people from using the libraries altogether	2.2
Should allow a donation scheme/donation boxes/being to donate books to library etc.	2.0
Cut high paid salaries/councillors' expenses etc./use money for the libraries	1.9
Agree with advertising and sponsorship/as long as it is done properly/may increase revenue	1.5
Co-locate a library with other services (gift shop, post office, crèche etc.)	1.4
Disagree with the use of Amazon/they don't pay their taxes therefore not even contributing to anything	1.4
Libraries could sell books/old stock to increase revenue	1.1
Libraries need improved opening hours/better opening times to accommodate more people	0.8
Agree with hiring out parking spaces/could generate income	0.7
Don't agree with proposal/proposals are discouraging/don't think they will work/been proposed before and didn't work	0.6
Agree with proposed installation of more vending machines/if vending machines are too be installed need to have healthy options	0.5
Disagree with commercial collection points/commercial partnerships/don't agree with privatisation	0.4
Other	34.9

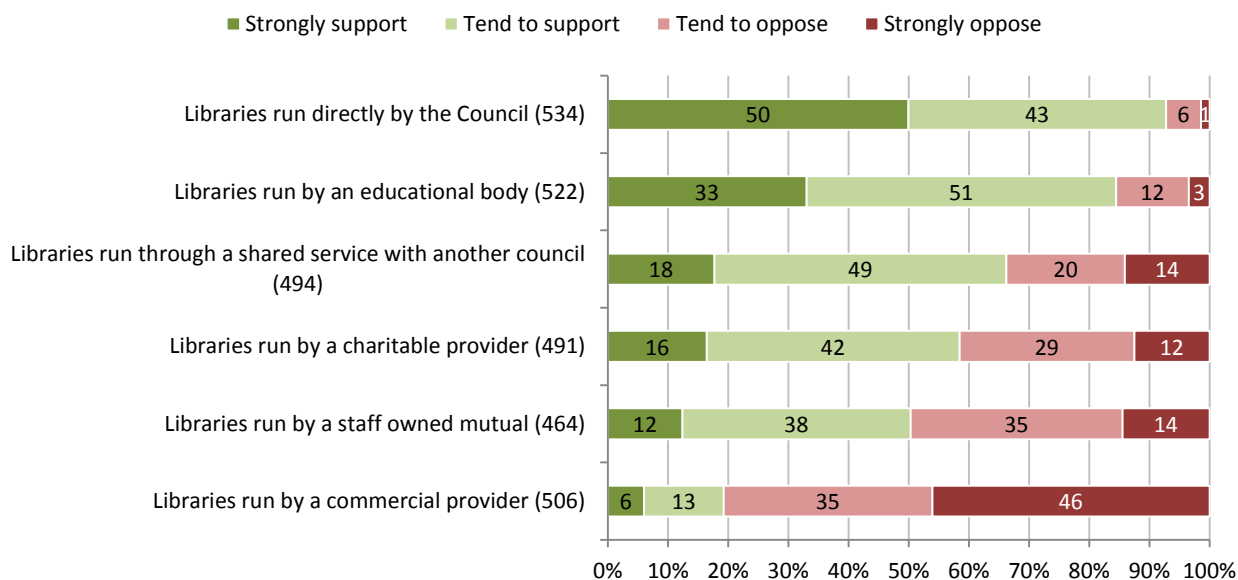
Alternative delivery models

To what extent do you support or oppose the potential delivery models that have been identified for the Library Service?

^{4.45} The most widely supported delivery model was libraries run directly by the Council (93%), followed by libraries run by an educational body (84%).

- 4.46 The only delivery model which less than half of panellists supported was libraries run by a commercial provider (19%).

Figure 17: Levels of support and opposition for the proposed delivery models (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



- 4.47 While a quarter (25%) of non-users supported libraries run by a commercial provider, this was only the case for 14% of users.

Do you have any other comments to make about these delivery proposals?

- 4.48 Just over a fifth of panellists who provided further comments felt the libraries should be left as they are, or that they are already in appropriate locations (22%).
- 4.49 15% expressed disagreement with most of the proposals, on the grounds that different providers might seek to influence decisions about the purchase of stock.

Figure 18: Further comments about proposed delivery models (Base: 60 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Libraries should be run directly by the council/shouldn't be outsourced/should be a public service	21.8
Disagree with proposals due to the fact different providers could influence stock/provide biased books	15.2
Agree that libraries should be run by an educational body/think joined up service between library and educational facilities would be good	5.8
Disagree that libraries should be run by a commercial provider/disagree with commercialisation of library service	4.9
Agree that libraries should be run by a charitable provider	4.0
Agree with proposed delivery models	4.0
As long as service is run properly it doesn't matter/quality and range of library services more important/as long as it provides good quality service	3.5
Disagree that libraries should be run by a charitable provider	3.0
Libraries need to stay free/a non-profit facility	2.7
Disagree that libraries should be run by an educational body	2.2

Libraries need to be run by experienced/trained/qualified staff	2.0
Libraries shouldn't be run by a commercial provider because it will be run like a business/only interested in profit	1.9
Disagree with proposed delivery models	1.7
Disagree with proposals as we already pay tax/the tax we pay should cover these services/don't want to pay additional costs	1.7
Not enough information provided/need more information to provide an educated answer	1.2
Don't agree with any cuts/libraries need to stay open/saving should be made elsewhere	1.0
Disagree with the use of Capita/outsourcing has failed previously/facilities dropped since outsourced with Capita i.e. IT services	0.7
Other	52.9

Specific library services

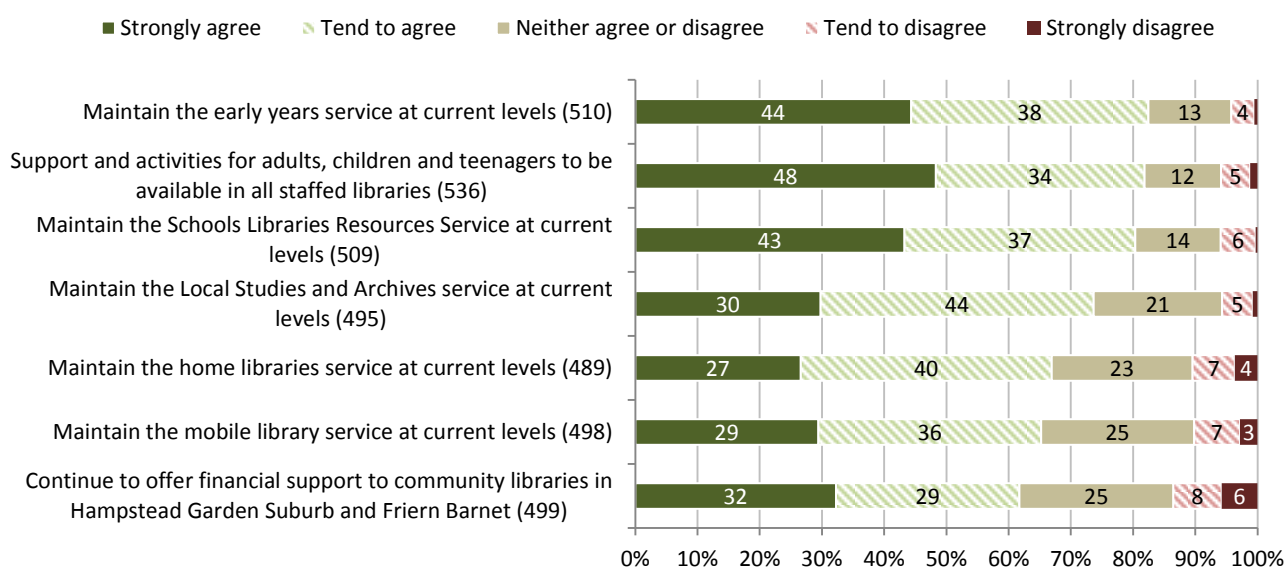
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these objectives?

4.50 All seven objectives for specific library services were supported by the majority of panellists. However, it is worth noting that more than four fifths supported:

- Maintaining the early years’ service at current levels (82%);
- Support and activities for adults, children and teenagers to be available in all staffed libraries (82%), and;
- Maintain the School Libraries Resources Service at current levels (80%).

4.51 The objective that achieved the least support was continuing to offer financial support to community libraries in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Friern Barnet (62%).

Figure 19: Levels of agreement and disagreement with the objectives for specific library services (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



4.52 On the whole, slightly higher proportions of users were in agreement, compared with non-users.

Do you have any other comments to make about maintaining these services or support?

4.53 The type of comment which was made most frequently (13%) expressed the view that all the services are essential, and should all be maintained.

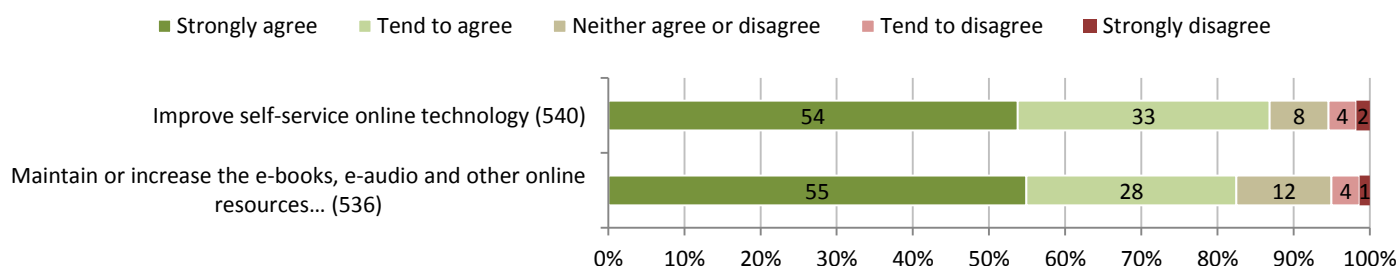
Figure 20: Further comments about specific services (Base: 39 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Maintain these services/they are all essential	13.2
Home and mobile library service important/home and mobile service needs to be improved not reduced	8.6
Libraries should be improved not just maintained/review these services to see if they could be improved	7.3
Support and activities for adults, children and teenagers important	5.6
Disagree with continued support for school libraries/should be funding themselves	4.7
Don't know enough about services/need more information about services	4.3
Need to reduce waste within library service to save money i.e. cutting big salaries etc.	3.7
Happy to pay minimal charge for library service/increase council tax to cover costs	3.7
Need increased funding from government/increase funding from alternative sources	3.0
Libraries are vital for literacy/education	3.0
Don't want to be cut back on services/cut backs will lead to library closures/keep the whole library service as it is	2.9
Need appropriate staffing levels/don't reduce staff/reintroduce old staffing levels	2.3
Keep services that support the most vulnerable people	1.8
Need to make appropriate use of volunteers/could make more use of volunteers	1.8
Other	50.5

To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following services should be expanded?

4.54 More than four fifths of panellists agreed with improving self-service online technology (87%) and maintaining or increasing the e-books, e-audio and other online resources and learning materials which are available to library users (82%).

Figure 21: Levels of agreement and disagreement with expanding particular services (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Do you have any other comments to make about the services that will be developed?

4.55 The main points raised by panellists in relation to the services that will be developed were:

- Not everybody is able to use or access technology (12%);
- Staff are vital for libraries, and technology is an inadequate replacement (10%);
- Comments about the e-book service, e.g. that there should be more choice, perhaps with the introduction of small charges (9%);
- Technology in libraries generally needs to be improved e.g. in terms of facilities to reserve books online, or the introduction of more user-friendly facilities (9%).

Figure 22: Further comments about expanding particular services (Base: 65 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Not everyone uses computers or technology i.e. inability to use computers/not having access to computers or technology etc.	12.4
Staff are vital for libraries/face to face contact/getting advice from fully trained staff/technology is not a replacement	9.9
Need to improve e-book service/introduce a e-book lending service/could charge a small amount to borrow e-book/better variety of books available on e-books	9.4
Technology in libraries needs to be improved i.e. being able to reserve books online/more user friendly facilities etc.	8.9
Generally agree with developing these services	8.2
Improving online services should not be at the cost of losing existing or traditional library services/it should be additional to current service	8.0
Prefer real books to e-books/hard copy should be available/libraries should have a good stock of books	7.5
Need to teach people how to use online facilities i.e. provide classes for elderly etc.	3.9
Don't want any cuts in library service/this is just a cover so the library service can be cut	3.1
Libraries are important for people in deprived area/people who are in most need	2.7
Libraries are important for local community/provide community space for facilities/activities etc.	1.3
Not everyone is interested in using computers or technology	1.2
Other	43.5

Do you have any alternative proposals for changes we could make to the library service?

4.56 The main alternative proposals raised by panellists in relation to the services that will be developed were:

- Increasing revenue by renting out library space to businesses, and/or co-locating with other services (e.g. cafés, small shops, GP surgeries) in a ‘community hub’ model (10%);
- Developing educational opportunities e.g. through links with schools (9%);
- Developing the e-book service e.g. introducing a small charge for an e-book lending service (8%).

Figure 23: Further comments about alternatives (Base: 44 respondents who provided comments)

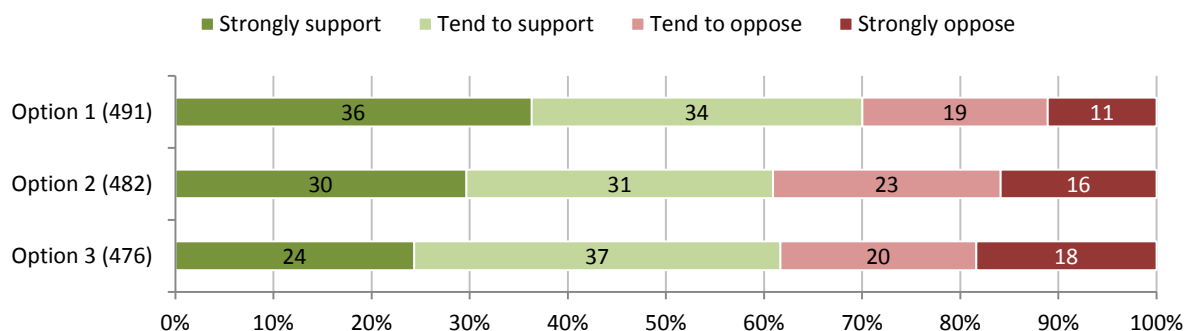
Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Increase revenue by renting out library space to businesses/Co-location of services in community hub model e.g. cafe/small shop/GP surgeries etc.	10.0
More educational opportunities e.g. links with schools	8.6
Agree with the use of e-books/provide better variety of e-books/introduce a e-book lending service/could charge a small amount to borrow e-books	8.0
Do not want any cuts in library service/do not want any libraries to close/libraries are essential/keep them as they are	7.6
Cut high paid salaries/councillors’ expenses etc./use money for the libraries	5.3
Better advertising of services	4.7
Increase council tax to keep library services/willing to pay more council tax for library services	4.3
Increase use of libraries by providing other services/more creative use of space i.e. evening classes/reading groups/activities etc./will increase revenue/football	3.9
Libraries need the ability to reserve/order books online i.e. click and collect	3.7
Need to get rid of cds/dvds in favour of books	3.6
Better funding/better funding from outside sources	3.2
Libraries are important for elderly/vulnerable/disabled people in the area/provides them with access to local facilities	3.1
Libraries need a good variety of stock	2.4
Libraries are important for local community/community hub/provide community space for facilities/activities etc.	2.0
Better computer/online facilities in library needed	1.9
Disagree with the use of technology	1.7
Prefer real books to e-books/hard copy should be available	1.7
Keep libraries staffed/need professional/qualified staff/face to face contact/appropriate staffing levels	1.5
Other	56.2

Options

Do you have any other comments to make about the services that will be developed?

^{4.57} The majority of panellists supported the three options. There was most support for Option 1 (70%), with similar proportions in support of Option 2 (61%) and Option 3 (62%).

Figure 24: Levels of support and opposition for the three options (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



4.58 The proportions of users supporting each option were slightly lower than the proportions of non-users.

Which of these options do you think is most appropriate for the library service in Barnet?

4.59 More panellists selected Option 1 as their first choice (41%) than any of the others.

4.60 Relatively few panellists chose to include ‘another option’ in their rankings (and those who did tended to rank it either as their most appropriate option, or as their least).

Figure 25: Panellists’ rankings for the options (row percentages)

		Option				
		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Another option	
OVERALL		n	%	%	%	%
Rank	1 – most appropriate	346	41.3	28.6	23.0	7.0
	2	271	29.8	38.3	28.2	3.8
	3	245	24.7	26.5	45.4	3.3
	4 – least appropriate	119	21.3	25.2	25.3	28.2

Do you have any other comments to make about these options or any other option the Council could consider for the service?

4.61 Nearly a third (31%) of panellists stated that they do not want any cuts in the library service, or any libraries to close. A tenth made comments agreeing with the use of technology (10%), and 8% made comments that expressed disagreement with all the options.

Figure 26: Other comments about the options or any option the council could consider (Base: 76 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	% (Weighted Valid)
Don't want any cuts in library service/don't want any libraries to close/libraries are essential/keep them as they are	30.6
Agree with the use of technology	10.2
Disagree/don't support any of these options	7.8
Libraries are important for local community/provide community space for facilities/activities etc.	7.0
Increase council tax to keep library services/willing to pay more council tax for library services	6.9
Don't want libraries opening times/hours reduced	4.3
Reduce opening times/hours to save money	4.2
Increase revenue by renting out library space for other services i.e. evening classes/reading groups etc.	4.2
Libraries need appropriately trained/qualified staff	3.7
Do not close/relocate Burnt Oak library	3.6
Do not close/relocate Hendon library	3.6
Disagree with proposals as we already pay tax/the tax we pay should cover these services/don't want to pay additional costs	3.5
Increase revenue by renting out library space to businesses i.e. café/shops etc.	3.5

Libraries are important for education/providing facilities for people to learn	3.5
Libraries should form partnerships with businesses/seek corporate sponsorships	3.4
Generally agree with reducing space/540 sq ft will be fine	3.3
Agree with the use of volunteers/volunteers could save money	3.3
Savings should be made elsewhere/could cut other services instead	3.1
Agree with option 2	2.7
Reduce staffing/staffing hours to save money	2.5
Generally disagree with reducing space/540 sq ft is too small	2.1
Proposals need to be re-thought/go back to the drawing board	1.7
Councils should be responsible for properly funding libraries/should invest more in libraries	1.7
Generally disagree with 30 minute travelling time/libraries need to be in walking distance	1.6
Disagree with options are will lead to unsafe libraries	1.6
Need alternative methods of increasing revenue/need to increase revenue in other ways (non-specific)	1.5
Disagree with reducing space/540 sq ft is too small for disabled access i.e. problems relating to wheelchair use	1.5
Libraries aren't that expensive to run/councils have enough money to run libraries	1.5
Questionnaire is biased/decisions have already made/this is just a fake exercise	1.4
This is a move towards closing libraries/libraries will not re-open when they close	1.3
Proposed savings would be minimal/savings wouldn't be enough to make a difference	1.2
Do not close/relocate Childs Hill library	1.2
Need more information about options/proposals/not enough information to make an informed decision	1.0
Libraries are important for children/getting children to enjoy a love of books	1.0
Generally disagree with unstaffed libraries	1.0
Do not close/relocate Osidge library	0.9
Need a better consultation process/more community input needed with regards to proposals/should be listening to staff of libraries	0.8
Need to expand the library/need to make the libraries bigger	0.8
Do not close/relocate East Finchley library	0.6
Other	57.9

Would you be interested in volunteering to help with activities in Barnet libraries?

Would you be interested in being involved in running a community library?

^{4.62} Around a third of panellists would be interested in volunteering to help with activities in Barnet libraries (34%), and a fifth would be interested in helping to run a community library (20%).

5. Main Consultation Questionnaire

Overview of the 'open' consultation questionnaire

Respondent Profile of Consultation Questionnaire

5.1 Figure 27 provides a breakdown of the respondent profile for the open questionnaire responses received.

Figure 27: Socio-demographic characteristics for the consultation questionnaire (Note: Percentages may not sum due to rounding)

Characteristic	All Responses		
	Number of Responses	% of Valid Responses	
BY AGE	Under 35	183	11.1%
	35-44	327	19.8%
	45-54	296	18.0%
	55-64	297	18.0%
	65 or over	545	33.1%
	Total valid responses	1,648	100.0%
	<i>Not known</i>	543	-
BY GENDER	Male	576	35.6%
	Female	1,043	64.4%
	Total valid responses	1,619	100.0%
	<i>Not known</i>	572	-
BY DISABILITY	Yes	158	9.9%
	No	1,446	90.1%
	Total valid responses	1,604	100.0%
	<i>Not known</i>	587	-
BY ETHNIC GROUP	White	1,420	88.3%
	Asian	107	6.7%
	Black	29	1.8%
	Mixed	34	2.1%
	Other	19	1.9%
	Total valid responses	1,609	100.0%
	<i>Not known</i>	582	-
RELIGION OR BELIEF	Agnostic	94	6.7%
	Atheist	149	10.6%
	Baha'i	1	0.1%
	Buddhist	8	0.6%
	Christian	540	38.3%
	Hindu	30	2.1%

	Humanist	17	1.2%
	Jain	18	1.3%
	Jewish	303	21.5%
	Muslim	33	2.3%
	Sikh	1	0.1%
	No religion	205	14.5%
	Other	11	0.8%
	Total valid responses	1,410	100.0%
	<i>Not known</i>	781	-

Duplicate Responses

- 5.2 The London Borough of Barnet was responsible for managing the gathering of responses to the online questionnaire, although these were then transferred to ORS for processing and analysis.
- 5.3 Eight of the online responses were found to be completely blank forms and were therefore discounted from the final total for analysis. A further 7 online responses were found to have been generated in the process of testing the online questionnaire, and so these ‘test records’ were also removed from the final total.
- 5.4 It is important that consultation questionnaires should be made open and accessible to all, while being alert to the possibility of multiple completions (by the same people) distorting the analysis. Therefore, while making it easy to complete the survey online, ORS typically monitors and reviews the IP addresses through which surveys are completed, as well as other identifiers such as ‘cookies’ and/or ‘session IDs’ where available.
- 5.5 While there were a number of duplicate IP addresses, in many cases these originated from libraries or other public buildings or locations – and given the nature and content of the consultation it is not surprising that many responses originated from these networks. Other identifiers such as cookie and session ID were not available for comparison.
- 5.6 Given that the open questionnaire is intended to provide everyone with the opportunity to share their views, it is important to recognise that the results will not necessarily provide a representative cross-section of opinions; therefore, ORS has decided that it is appropriate that all of the responses discussed above should be included and none should be excluded on the basis of identical IP addresses. The final total of questionnaires that was considered for analysis was 2,191.

Responses from organisations

- 5.7 The 2,191 responses included 13 purporting to represent a community or voluntary organisation, 9 claiming to represent a business based in Barnet, and 3 claiming to represent a public sector organisation.

Changes to the questionnaire

- 5.8 Following feedback from ORS made after the main online questionnaire had gone ‘live’, a limited number of changes were made to the questionnaire on 17th November 2015. These are briefly outlined in this report (under the relevant questions below – see paragraphs 5.16, 5.17, 5.25 and 5.73), and

results from before and after the changes are presented separately as appropriate (i.e. would be inappropriate to combine the responses from before and after into one single, aggregated result, due to issues around incomparability).

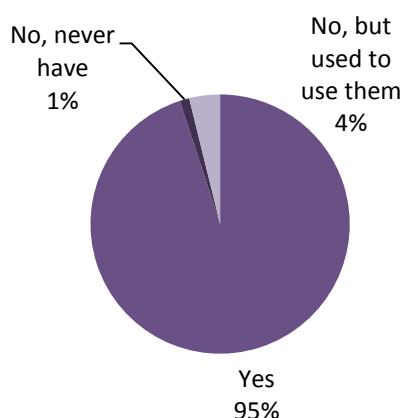
Main findings

Outcomes and objectives

Do you use Barnet’s library service?

- 5.9 The vast majority of respondents (95%) identified themselves as users of Barnet’s library service.
- 5.10 A further 4% had used Barnet’s libraries in the past, while only 1% of respondents had never used the library service.

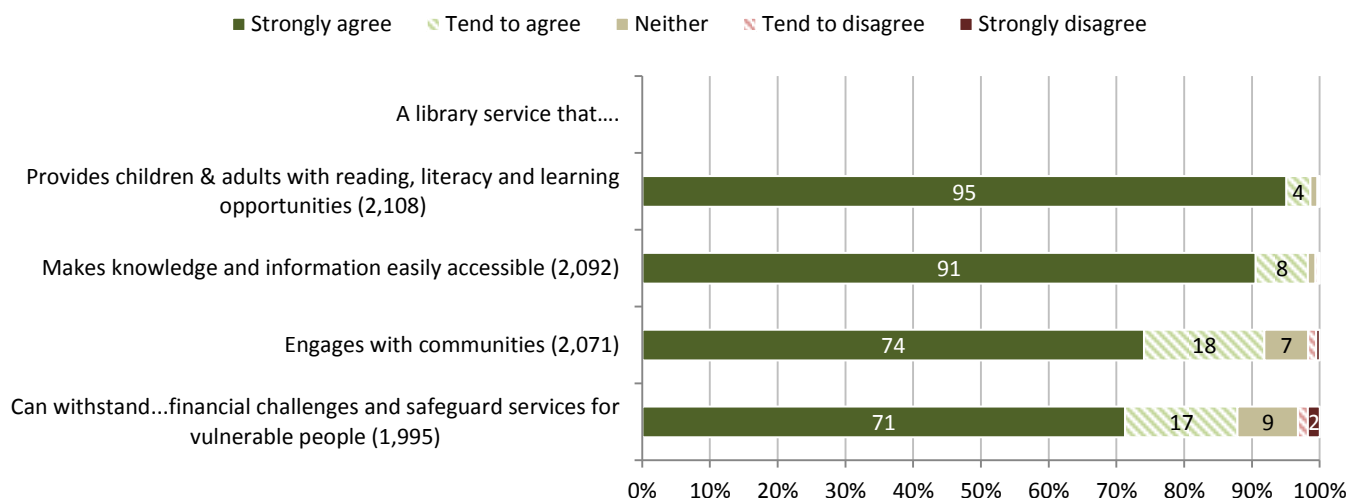
Figure 28: Whether respondents use Barnet’s library service (Base: 2,107)



To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these objectives?

- 5.11 The vast majority of respondents agreed with each of the objectives. In particular, nearly all respondents agreed with the following:
- *A library service that provides children and adults with reading, literacy and learning opportunities (99%); and*
 - *A library service that makes knowledge and information easily accessible (98%).*
- 5.12 Substantial majorities also agreed with:
- *A library service that engages with communities (92%); and*
 - *A library service that can withstand current and future financial challenges and safeguard service for vulnerable people (88%).*

Figure 29: Levels of agreement and disagreement with the four objectives (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Do you have any other comments to make about these objectives?

- 5.13 The open ended comments have been captured and summarised using a standardised code frame. In Figure 30 below and the other tables of coded comments which follow, the number of respondents making each comment is shown, along with the percentage of respondents who made that comment (NB: in each table, the base for calculating percentages is the number of respondents who provided comments for that particular question).
- 5.14 684 respondents provided further comments. Of these, a fifth (20%) expressed a view that libraries are a vital service for the community, and promote community engagement.
- 5.15 More than a tenth (13%) felt that library services are vital because of their educational value for children e.g. helping young children to interact with each other, and encouraging them to read from a young age. Nearly a tenth (9%) commented on the role the service plays in supporting adult education.

Figure 30: Further comments about objectives (Base: 684 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Libraries are a vital service for the community/community engagement	134	19.6
Library facilities are vital for children for educational purposes/children interacting with each other/libraries are there to encourage children from a young age to read	87	12.7
Libraries are vital for education/getting adults to further education/should provide educational classes for adults/encourage adults to read etc.	64	9.4
Libraries need to have qualified staff/staff are vital for libraries/helping with needs/giving advice/information/engaging with people especially elderly	55	8.0
Update existing libraries/invest and develop current libraries/no cuts	46	6.7
Libraries need to have local access/better access i.e. libraries need to be more central/closer etc.	45	6.6
Questionnaire is biased/questions are leading/otherwise unhappy with consultation	44	6.4
Libraries are vital for people without facilities/people that don't have access to computers/books etc./from low income	44	6.4
Disagree with the closure of libraries/should keep libraries open	44	6.4
The library service is a priority/savings can be made elsewhere/increase funds for	41	6.0

library/increased investment needed		
Libraries are important local facilities/they should be kept as they are	33	4.8
Libraries are vital for the public to be able to access information easily	31	4.5
Libraries are vital for elderly people/will impact negatively on elderly people/provides a place for them to go/interact with other people	30	4.4
Generally agree with proposals/good idea	28	4.1
Don't understand the information/questions/objectives aren't clear	24	3.5
Libraries should provide space for increased activities/facilities i.e. community meetings/book clubs etc./increasing activities will bring in more people/money to the library	22	3.2
Generally disagree with proposals/bad idea	21	3.1
Need a better range/variety of stock i.e. up to date books/DVDs etc./shouldn't reduce range of books	21	3.1
Libraries need to be free/libraries should always be free	21	3.1
Need to improve/extend opening hours/times of libraries	18	2.6
It is vital that the council safeguard services for vulnerable groups	18	2.6
Disagree with unstaffed library/I am too vulnerable for libraries to be unmanned/ machines need well trained, professional staff	17	2.5
Don't agree with the 4th option/against the 4th option	17	2.5
These are obvious factors everyone will agree on	16	2.3
Option 4 should be split out/current and future financial challenges and safeguarding services for vulnerable people are two different objectives	15	2.2
Libraries provide a quiet/safe place to study	14	2.0
Prepared to change with the times/more relevant technology for libraries/upgrade current systems	13	1.9
Our current library already has these provisions in place	12	1.8
Councils should be responsibility to provide these services/make these decisions	12	1.8
Libraries already provide a good space for activities/groups/meetings etc.	12	1.8
The proposals won't meet these objectives	11	1.6
Increase council tax/tax richer people/businesses to fund libraries	11	1.6
Prefer reading hard copy/reading books is better than using computers/should be using less computers/less screen based reading	9	1.3
Sufficient resources will be needed for these proposals to work	8	1.2
It is not the councils responsibility/concern to be safeguarding vulnerable people/libraries responsibility/it is social services' responsibility	6	0.9
Libraries provide good value for money/the cost of libraries is small in comparison to their worth	6	0.9
Provide better range of refreshments available i.e. café/vending machines etc.	5	0.7
Introduce minimal charges/charges for borrowing books i.e. happy to pay for service/introduce annual fee/membership fee etc.	4	0.6
Disagree with the use volunteers/shouldn't use the volunteer sector as standards won't be adequate	4	0.6
Do not have access to a computer/internet/online services/not everyone has access to it causing people to be left out	2	0.3
Agree with the use of volunteers/should explore using volunteers to help cut costs for libraries	2	0.3
Reduce charges within libraries/remove late fees	1	0.1
Other	134	19.6

Changes to support/oppose scale

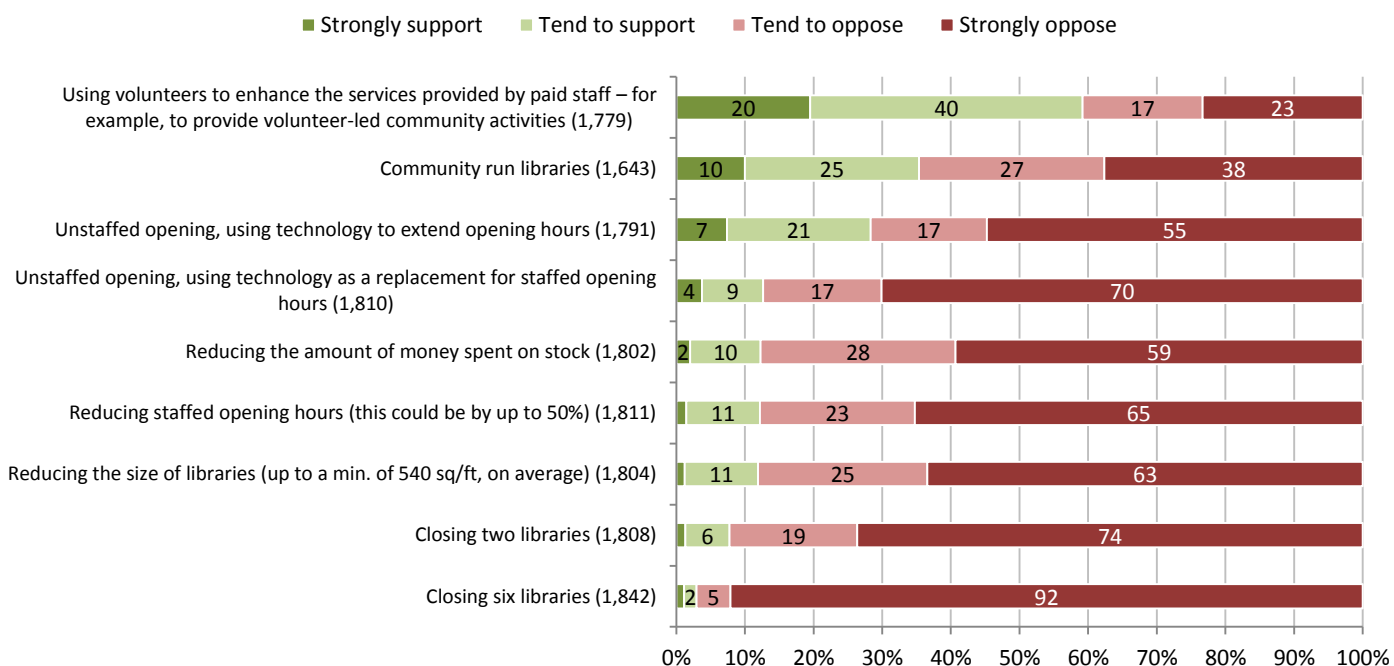
- 5.16 A number of questions in the consultation questionnaire asked respondents about the extent to which they support or oppose various proposals. When fieldwork started, respondents were able to choose options on the following 4-point scale: *Strongly support*, *Tend to support*, *Do not support*, *Strongly oppose*.
- 5.17 On November 17th 2014 (i.e. just under a week into the fieldwork period), the *Do not support* option was replaced with a *Tend to oppose* option, with the intention of making the scale more balanced and easier for respondents to understand. While ORS feels that this change improves the balance of the scale, it is also its view that it would be inappropriate to combine the responses from before and after into one single, aggregated result, due to issues around incomparability. Results from before and after this change have been reported separately for any questions where this scale was used.

What could change?

To what extent do you support or oppose the following approaches to help save money?

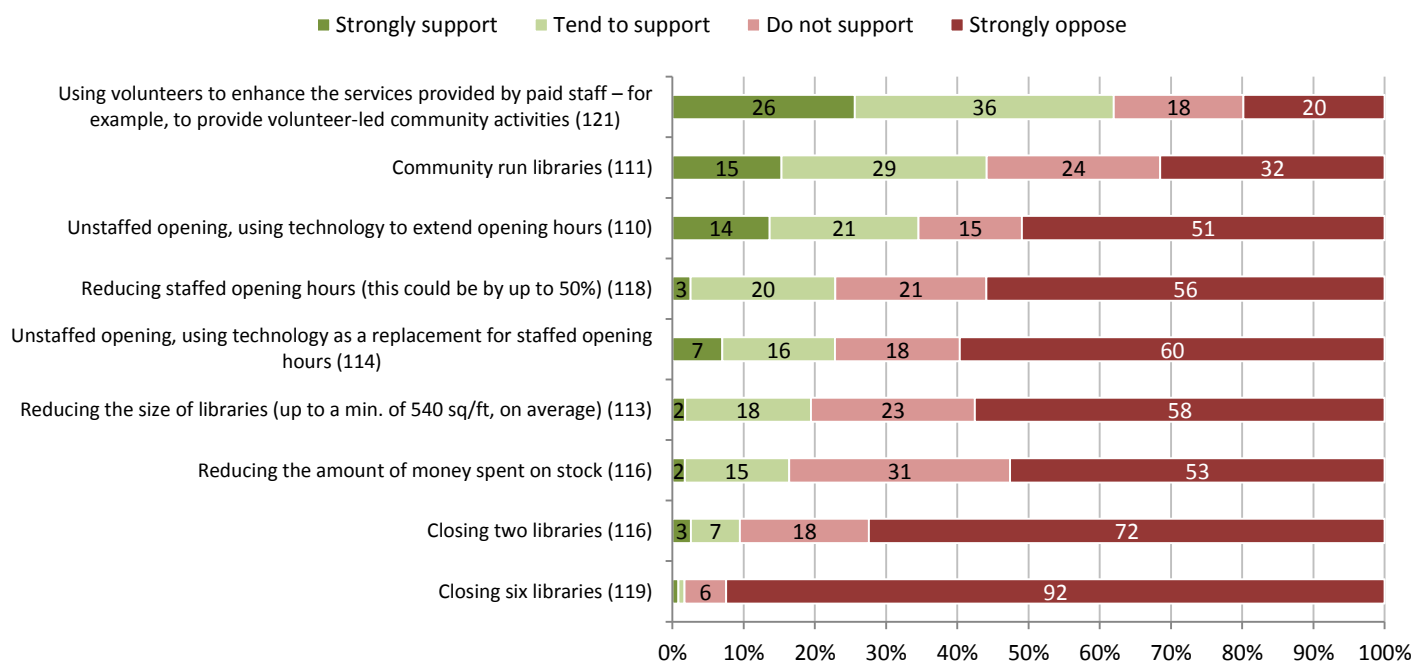
- 5.18 The only proposal which more than half of respondents supported was using volunteers to enhance the services provided by paid staff (e.g. to provide volunteer-led community activities) (59%).
- 5.19 The majority of respondents opposed the other options. In particular, more than 9 out of 10 opposed closing two libraries (92%), and closing six libraries (97%).
- 5.20 More than 8 out of 10 respondents opposed reducing the size of libraries (to a minimum of 540 square feet on average) (88%); reducing staffed opening hours (by up to 50%) (88%); reducing the amount of money spent on stock (88%); and unstaffed opening, using technology as a replacement for staffed opening hours (87%).

Figure 31: Levels of support and opposition for the proposed approaches to save money (revised scale; online responses from 17.11.14 and all postal responses) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



5.21 The online results which were received prior to the scale being changed show a generally similar overall picture, with most support for using volunteers and least support for closing libraries.

Figure 32: Levels of support and opposition for the proposed approaches to save money (original scale; online responses up to 17.11.14) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Do you have any other comments to make about these approaches to help save money? If you don't support any of these approaches please say why.

5.22 The following points comments were raised by more than a tenth of the respondents who provided further comments:

- There should be no closures or cuts within the library service; libraries should be kept as they are (21%);
- Libraries should be kept staffed; professional, qualified individuals are needed to provide advice and face-to-face contact (20%);
- Individuals would not use unstaffed libraries and/or unstaffed libraries would not be safe or secure (12%);
- Libraries are important for local community, and provide community space for facilities/activities etc. (11%).

5.23 Readers are encouraged to consult Figure 33 for a fuller summary of the wide range of views expressed.

Figure 33: Further comments about proposals to save money (Base: 922 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Don't want closures within library service/keep libraries as they are/don't want any cuts in library service	190	20.6

Keep libraries staffed/need professional/qualified staff/provide advice/face to face contact	180	19.5
I wouldn't use unstaffed libraries/unstaffed libraries wouldn't be safe/secure	111	12.0
Libraries are important for local community/provide community space for facilities/activities etc.	106	11.5
Generally disagree with reducing space/540 sq ft is too small	83	9.0
Disagree with the use of volunteers/libraries need qualified/properly trained staff	80	8.7
Agree with the use of volunteers as long as it is alongside existing library facilities	68	7.4
Generally disagree with proposals/bad idea	66	7.2
Libraries are important for children/getting children to enjoy a love of books	61	6.6
Concerns that unstaffed libraries would be targeted by criminals i.e. problems relating to theft of books/computers/vandalism etc.	57	6.2
Libraries are important for education/providing facilities for people to learn.	55	6.0
Libraries need good/better variety of stock	54	5.9
Savings should be made elsewhere	46	5.0
Increase council tax to keep library services/willing to pay more council tax for library services	44	4.8
Disagree with the use of technology/it should not replace staff/cannot run library solely with technology	44	4.8
Options will be detrimental to library service	37	4.0
Libraries are important for elderly/vulnerable/disabled people in the area/provides them with access to local facilities	36	3.9
Generally disagree with unstaffed libraries	35	3.8
Libraries need to be within a reasonable distance/easy access needed to library	34	3.7
Cut high paid salaries/councillors' expenses etc./use money for the libraries	29	3.1
Councils should properly fund libraries/should invest in libraries	29	3.1
Increase revenue by renting out library space for other services i.e. evening classes/reading groups etc.	28	3.0
Agree with the use of technology as long as it is alongside existing library facilities/it should be additional to current service/not replacing	27	2.9
Increase revenue by renting out library space to businesses i.e. café/shops etc.	26	2.8
Agree with the use of volunteers/prefer libraries using volunteers than machines	25	2.7
Disagree with reduction in opening times/hours	23	2.5
Reduce amount of stock to save money/sell off stock to make money	21	2.3
Libraries are important for people in deprived area/people who are in most need	18	2.0
Introduce minimal charges to libraries/happy to pay small charges/could introduce annual membership fees/joining fees etc.	18	2.0
CCTV is an inadequate security measure to be a deterrent/additional security measures would be needed i.e. security guards etc.	16	1.7
Reduce opening times/hours to save money	16	1.7
Reduce bureaucracy/red tape/council wastage	15	1.6
Library already has sufficient stock/variety/no need to spend more money on stock	12	1.3
Not enough detail given/need more information on proposals	9	1.0
Libraries should form partnerships with businesses/seek corporate sponsorships	9	1.0
Reduce number of staff/employ less staff to save money	7	0.8
Generally agree with reducing space	6	0.7
Questionnaire is biased/decisions have already made	6	0.7
Unstaffed libraries will eventually lead to closures for libraries/proposals will lead to closures	5	0.5
Not everyone uses computers or technology i.e. inability to use computers/not having access to computers or technology etc.	5	0.5

Generally agree with proposals/good idea	2	0.2
Need to teach people how to use online facilities i.e. provide classes for elderly etc.	2	0.2
Agree with the closing of 2 libraries/prefer 2 libraries to close than 6	1	0.1
Other	276	29.9

Library opening times

- 5.24 The questionnaire asked respondents to identify when they would most like libraries to be staffed, by inviting them to rank the days of the week and different times of day in order of importance.
- 5.25 The precise question wordings were amended from “*Which days of the week would you want libraries to be staffed?*” and “*What time of the day would you want libraries to be staffed?*” to ask respondents when they felt it was “*most important for libraries to be staffed*”, although there is little to suggest that this change altered the overall pattern of results.
- 5.26 It is also important to note that these questions were not particularly well answered in general. The fact that many respondents chose not to answer the question (either at all or in a valid manner) – perhaps feeling that libraries should be continuously staffed, and therefore they could not prioritise particular days and times – should also be borne in mind when interpreting the results which follow.
- 5.27 ORS also notes that the questionnaire did not ask respondents to rank specific combinations of times and days of the week, and this should also be considered when considering the results. For example, certain opening times might have been seen as more appropriate for the working week, while others might have been seen as most appropriate for weekends.

On which days of the week do you think it is most important for libraries to be staffed?

At which times of day do you think it is most important for libraries to be staffed?

(Please rank each day/time according to importance: cross a box between 1 and 7, 1 being most important and 7 being least important. Please use each value only once. You do not have to rank all days/times)

- 5.28 For each ranking (i.e. row), the two days of the week/times of day which were most commonly selected are highlighted, with deeper shading to indicate the day which was selected most often within that ranking.
- 5.29 The results suggest there was most support for having staffed libraries on Saturdays and much less support for having them on Sundays (although it’s worth noting that around a fifth of respondents nominated Sunday as their ‘second choice’) (see Figure 34).
- 5.30 However, the results are widely spread; and while relatively few respondents identified Tuesday through to Friday as the most important days for libraries to be staffed, relatively few identified these as being the least important days either.

Figure 34: Importance of libraries being staffed on different days

On what days of the week do you think it is most important for libraries to be staffed?		Day of week						
		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
OVERALL		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Rank	1 – most important	18.4	4.0	3.3	2.6	4.3	57.7	9.7
	2	14.8	17.8	7.3	5.3	22.2	12.8	19.9
	3	13.8	14.4	21.0	20.0	21.7	4.7	4.7
	4	10.6	14.7	27.9	31.9	8.2	2.1	4.6
	5	7.1	20.9	23.6	18.8	21.6	5.0	3.1
	6	18.4	20.9	8.7	13.2	15.1	15.4	8.4
	7 – least important	14.6	3.5	4.1	4.7	6.4	9.5	57.2
ONLINE RESPONSES FROM BEFORE CHANGE TO QUESTION		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Rank	1 – most important	23.8	5.0	3.1	3.1	5.0	52.5	7.5
	2	16.3	24.2	6.5	2.6	19.0	13.1	18.3
	3	14.0	14.7	29.3	18.7	16.7	4.0	2.7
	4	8.9	14.4	27.4	37.7	8.2	1.4	2.1
	5	5.4	19.0	23.8	17.7	27.9	3.4	2.7
	6	16.9	16.9	6.3	13.4	16.9	22.5	7.0
	7 – least important	13.4	2.7	2.0	3.4	8.7	6.0	63.8

- 5.31 In terms of different times of the day, the results suggest that respondents are most likely to identify the period from late morning (10am to 12pm) to late afternoon/early evening (4pm to 6pm) as being the most important period of the day for libraries to be staffed (see Figure 9 below).
- 5.32 The earliest and latest times (before 10am and after 8pm) were most commonly identified as being among the least important (i.e. most likely to be given a ranking of 7).

Figure 35: Importance of libraries being staffed at different times.

At what times of day do you think it is most important for libraries to be staffed?		Time						
		Earlier than 10am	10am-12pm	12pm-2pm	2pm-4pm	4pm-6pm	6pm-8pm	After 8pm
OVERALL		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Rank	1 – most important	8.6	30.0	8.0	9.0	26.1	12.5	5.8
	2	5.6	13.2	20.8	19.6	18.3	17.8	4.7
	3	4.8	13.7	20.7	29.4	14.4	12.6	4.4

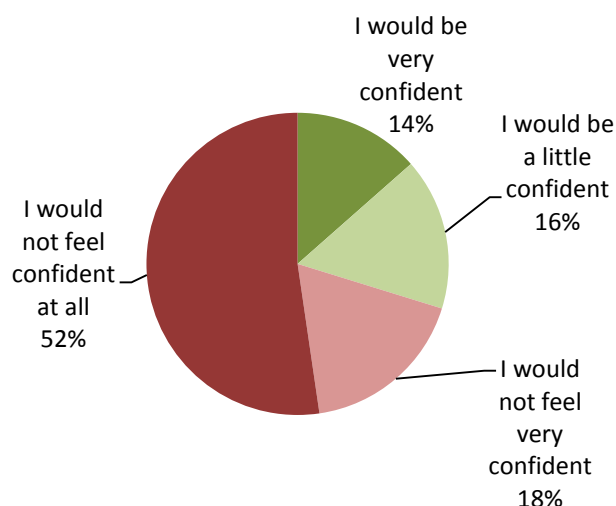
At what times of day do you think it is most important for libraries to be staffed?		Time						
		Earlier than 10am	10am-12pm	12pm-2pm	2pm-4pm	4pm-6pm	6pm-8pm	After 8pm
	4	6.0	14.0	20.4	22.0	22.8	11.6	3.2
	5	12.9	14.2	18.8	10.7	12.7	25.0	5.7
	6	30.0	11.1	6.5	5.7	3.1	22.6	21.1
	7 – least important	30.7	3.5	1.9	2.0	4.5	2.0	55.3
ONLINE RESPONSES BEFORE CHANGE TO QUESTION		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Rank	1 – most important	10.7	38.4	7.5	8.2	21.4	8.8	5.0
	2	4.0	11.9	29.1	21.2	15.9	12.6	5.3
	3	4.8	10.2	17.0	35.4	13.6	15.6	3.4
	4	9.2	14.1	19.0	20.4	24.6	9.9	2.8
	5	11.7	12.4	18.2	8.8	19.0	24.1	5.8
	6	26.8	8.7	8.0	3.6	2.2	30.4	20.3
	7 – least important	31.4	5.0	0.7	2.9	3.6	1.4	55.0

- 5.33 In summary, when respondents were asked about days, Saturday emerged as an important day. When respondents were asked about times of day, late morning and early evening emerged strongly, and there was also support for staffed opening during afternoons.
- 5.34 However, ORS would note again that respondents were not given the opportunity to prioritise interlocked days and times. Therefore one might speculate that respondents who regarded early evening opening hours as important may have been thinking particularly in terms of staffed opening hours during the working or school week.

In terms of using an unstaffed library, which of the following statements applies most closely to you?

- 5.35 Just over half of respondents (52%) said they would not feel confident at all about using an unstaffed library. A further 18% would not feel very confident.
- 5.36 Less than a third (30%) said they would feel either very confident or a little confident.

Figure 36: Extent to which respondents would feel confident about using an unstaffed library (Base: 1,881)



What would increase the likelihood of you using an unstaffed library?

- 5.37 Respondents were asked what would encourage them to use an unstaffed library. Two options (volunteers on site and help learning how to use self-service) were provided, and there was also an opportunity for respondents to identify 'other' things that would encourage them to use an unstaffed library.
- 5.38 More than half indicated that having volunteers on-site (55%) would encourage them to use an unstaffed library, and nearly a quarter (23%) indicated that they would be encouraged by help learning how to use self-service. However, the 'other' comments provided were largely critical of the concept or principle of unstaffed libraries; for example, the most frequently made points included:
- There is nothing that would encourage respondents to use unstaffed libraries (12%);
 - Libraries need to be staffed for security reasons, and respondents would feel safer in a manned library and/or would not feel safe or secure in an unstaffed library (8%);
 - Staff are vital for libraries, and/or having staff is only thing that would encourage respondents to use libraries (5%).

Figure 37: Further comments about objectives (Base: 1,559 respondents)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Volunteers on site	864	55.4
Help learning how to use self-service	352	22.6
Nothing/nothing would encourage me to use unstaffed libraries	185	11.9
Libraries need to be staffed for security reason/feel safer in a manned library/wouldn't be	125	8.0

confident/they wouldn't be confident/they wouldn't be safe/secure		
Staff are vital for libraries/Having staff is only thing that would encourage me to use libraries	85	5.5
Additional security measures would be needed i.e. security guards etc./CCTV is an inadequate security measure to be a deterrent	68	4.4
Generally disagree with unstaffed libraries/don't think it will work	54	3.5
Staff are vital for giving advice/information/knowledge of books/staff should be paid/trained/professional	40	2.6
Concerns that unstaffed libraries would be targeted by criminals i.e. problems relating to theft of books/computers/vandalism etc.	19	1.2
Staff are vital for engaging with people especially elderly/gives a personal touch	13	0.8
Disagree with the use of volunteers/shouldn't use the volunteer sector as standards won't be adequate/volunteers devalue the skills of a librarian	8	0.5
Easy instructions needed for use of equipment/computers	7	0.4
Help/advice available via telephone or chat line	4	0.3
Agree with the use of volunteers/should explore using volunteers to help cut costs for libraries	3	0.2
Generally agree with unstaffed libraries/think it will work	2	0.1
Longer/better opening hours/times	2	0.1
There are not enough staff as it is/loss of jobs would negatively impact Barnet	1	0.1
Happy to use self- service machines/more efficient	1	0.1
Other	132	8.5

Do you have any other comments to make about these approaches to staffing and opening times?

- 5.39 More than a thousand respondents provided comments, of whom almost two fifths expressed a view that libraries need to be staffed for security reasons and to enable service users to feel safe (39%).
- 5.40 15% suggested that libraries should have staff who can offer professional advice, information and assistance. The same proportion expressed a similar view, namely that staff are vitally important in terms of addressing needs and engaging with people, particularly the elderly.

Figure 38: Further comments about staffing and opening times (Base: 1,033 respondents)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Libraries need to be staffed for security reasons/feel safer in a manned library/wouldn't use unstaffed libraries/they wouldn't be safe/secure	407	39.4
Libraries should have staff who know the library/who can give advice/information/offer professionalism/help and assistance	157	15.2
Staff are vital for libraries/helping with needs/engaging with people especially elderly/give a personal touch	155	15.0
Against limiting opening hours/different people use libraries at different times/need range of days and times	140	13.6
Generally disagree with unstaffed libraries/don't think it will work	139	13.5
Concerns that unstaffed libraries would be targeted by criminals i.e. problems relating to theft of books/computers/vandalism etc.	132	12.8
Can't be reliant on self-serving machines due to mechanical failures/concerns about using self-service/others may not be able to manage using them	56	5.4
CCTV is an inadequate security measure to be a deterrent/additional security measures would be needed i.e. security guards	51	4.9
Disagree with the use of volunteers/shouldn't use the volunteer sector as standards won't be adequate/volunteers devalue the skills of a librarian	46	4.5

Staff are vital to maintain order/quiet/need to be present when there are children there/maintain discipline with children	28	2.7
Keep the staff/there are not enough staff as it is/loss of jobs would negatively impact Barnet	26	2.5
I disagree with downsizing libraries/don't want any libraries to close	25	2.4
Questionnaire is biased/questions are leading/otherwise unhappy with consultation	24	2.3
Unstaffed library will not be beneficial to those vulnerable/elderly who wish to access it	21	2
It is not cost effective/the savings will be minimal/If you're paying for CCTV and security you may as well pay staff	19	1.8
Agree with the use of volunteers/should explore using volunteers to help cut costs for libraries	16	1.5
Keep the current format as it is/libraries already have appropriate staffing	16	1.5
Happy to use self- service machines/more efficient	15	1.5
What happens is there is an emergency/power cut/electrical failure/pass keys stop working	13	1.3
Generally agree with unstaffed libraries/think it will work	11	1.1
There should be a combination of full time staff and volunteer staff	10	1
Your proposals will stop people going to the library, justifying future closures	9	0.9
We should have both staff and self-service/a combination of the two/good idea but only outside core operational hours/only staff at peak times	8	0.8
Cut staff from the council/head office not librarians	8	0.8
Maximise opportunities to raise money/income i.e. hire meeting rooms/activities/shops	7	0.7
Volunteers can't be expected to take on the risks	6	0.6
I agree with reducing staff to help cut costs	6	0.6
Libraries need to be adequately funded to maintain appropriate levels of staff/remain open	5	0.5
We need someone to be present to offer technical support	5	0.5
We pay council tax for these services, they shouldn't be cut	4	0.4
Pay current staff less to save the libraries money	1	0.1
There would be too many pin numbers to remember	1	0.1
Not enough detail given/need more information on proposals	1	0.1
Other	143	13.8

Relocation and development of library sites

To what extent do you support or oppose the following relocation and redevelopment opportunities?

5.41 None of the relocation and redevelopment opportunities had the support of a majority of respondents; levels of opposition were higher across the board.

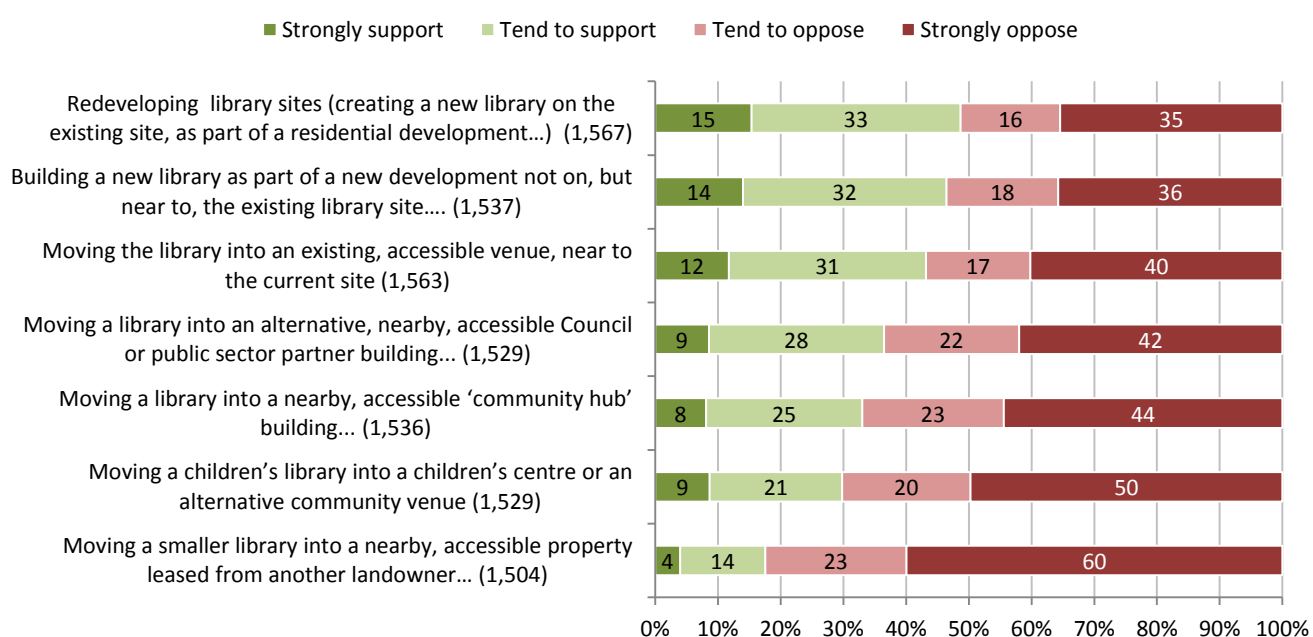
5.42 However, respondents were most supportive of:

- Redeveloping library sites (creating a new library on the existing site as part of a residential development, with housing above it – an opportunity to create a more accessible, fit for purpose library building) (49%);
- Building a new library as part of a new development not on, but near to, the existing library site (46%); and
- Moving the library into an existing, accessible venue near to the current site (43%).

5.43 Fewer respondents (around a third or less) supported:

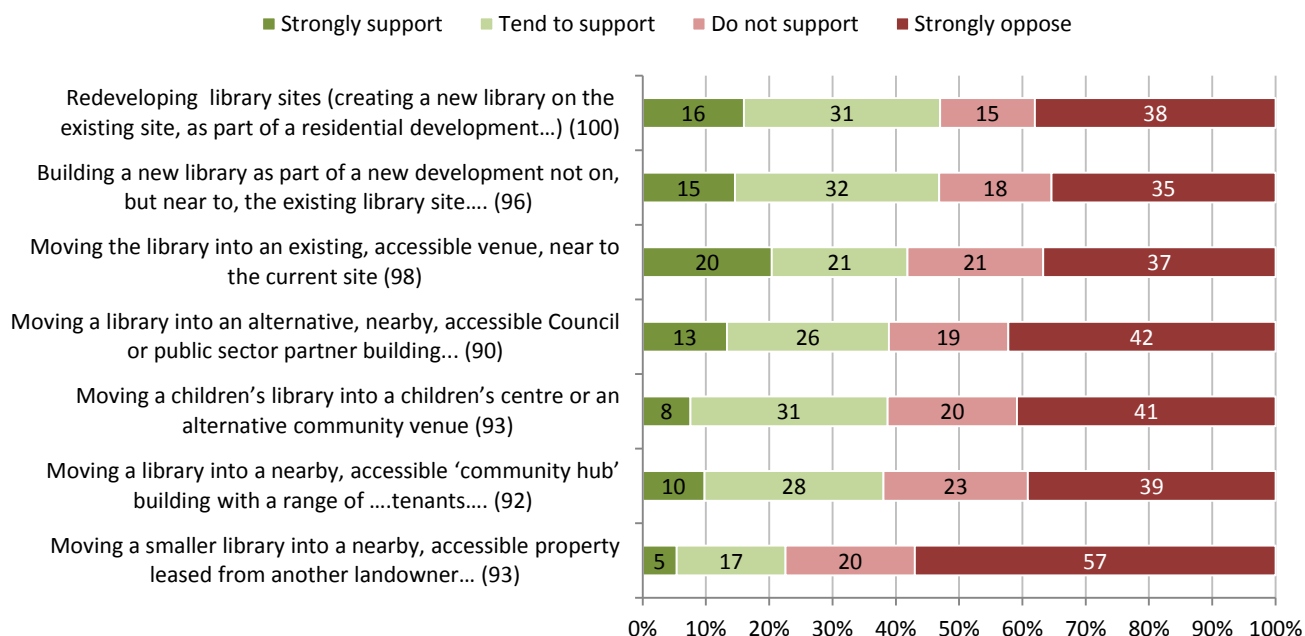
- Moving the library into a nearby, accessible ‘community hub’ building with a range of voluntary and community sector activities (33%);
- Moving a children’s library into a children’s centre or an alternative community venue (30%); and,
- Moving a smaller library into a nearby, accessible property leased from another landowner (this would only be an option if the income which could be generated from the existing site is greater than the cost of the lease) (18%).

Figure 39: Levels of support and opposition for the relocation and redevelopment proposals (revised scale; online responses from 17.11.14 and all postal responses) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



5.44 As Figure 40 below illustrates, the results from the period before the scale was changed present a generally similar picture.

Figure 40: Levels of support and opposition for the relocation and redevelopment proposals (original scale; online responses up to 17.11.14) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Do you have any other comments to make about these possibilities for relocation and redevelopment? If you don't support any of these approaches please say why.

5.45 Nearly a quarter (23%) of the 861 respondents who commented stated that libraries should be left as they are and not closed or moved, or that they are already in suitable locations.

5.46 More than a tenth of respondents’ comments related to the following:

- These proposals will not be cost-effective, as they will generate more cost, and/or too much has already been invested into the libraries at their current locations (12%);
- They would not want relocated or redeveloped libraries if this means that libraries become smaller (11%);
- They would not want a separate library for children (e.g. as this would mean a parent would have to go to two different libraries) (10%).

Figure 41: Further comments about the possibilities for relocation and redevelopment (Base: 861 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Leave the libraries as they are/don't move libraries/already in good locations that meet needs of community/do not close	199	23.1
These proposals will create more cost/moving these libraries will create more cost/invested so much into these libraries	103	12.0
Don't want relocated or redeveloped libraries if they are smaller	96	11.1
Don't want separate library for children/meaning parent would have to go to two different	90	10.5

libraries		
Libraries are purpose built or old buildings that should be protected	72	8.4
Generally disagree with proposals/bad idea/won't work	61	7.1
Do not close/relocate East Finchley library	55	6.4
Libraries should be within reasonable distance/walking distance	53	6.2
This is a move towards closing libraries/libraries will not re-open when they close	35	4.1
Proposals are financially motivated/detrimental to services/oppose further cuts	35	4.1
Libraries are important for the community/provide a meeting place within the community	34	3.9
New library locations will need good access i.e. car parking facilities	32	3.7
Private developers/landlords/companies will profit from this/move towards privatisation	28	3.3
Not enough detail/information given on proposals	27	3.1
Consultation is flawed/badly designed/biased	24	2.8
Retain stock/variety of books	23	2.7
Utilise space within library for other services i.e. play centre/other public services/meeting rooms	21	2.4
Retain professional/paid staff	19	2.2
East Finchley library is well situated/centrally located in the community	16	1.9
Do not close/relocate South Friern library	14	1.6
Generally agree with proposals/good idea/think they will work	13	1.5
Do not close/relocate Mill Hill library	13	1.5
No evidence that money saved will be reinvested in the library service/money saved should be reinvested in library service	12	1.4
Don't agree as promises haven't been kept with regards to Totteridge library/proposed to be reopened and still hasn't	10	1.2
Councils should properly fund libraries	9	1.0
Increase council tax to cover costs of libraries	9	1.0
Utilise space within library for café/coffee shop facilities	9	1.0
Do not close/relocate Burnt Oak library	8	0.9
Do not close/relocate Childs Hill library	8	0.9
Do not close/relocate Chipping Barnet library	8	0.9
Do not close/relocate East Barnet library	8	0.9
Do not close/relocate Edgware library	7	0.8
Do not close/relocate Hendon library	7	0.8
Relocating libraries will result in reduced usage	6	0.7
Mill Hill library is well situated/centrally located in the community	6	0.7
Should not use blanket/one size fits all approach/approach library individually	5	0.6
Library facilities are vital for children for educational purposes/children interacting with each other/libraries are there	5	0.6
Do not close/relocate Church End library	4	0.5
Do not close/relocate North Finchley library	4	0.5
Approve of integration of social housing/libraries	4	0.5
Edgware library is well situated/centrally located in the community	4	0.5
Options will lead to a reduced/poor service/options will cause a deterioration in library	3	0.3
Libraries are important for education/providing facilities for people to learn	3	0.3
Do not close/relocate Golders Green library	2	0.2
Libraries should form partnerships with businesses/other organisations	2	0.2
Chipping Barnet library is well situated/centrally located in the community	2	0.2

Do not close/relocate Osidge library	1	0.1
Other	255	29.6

Generating income

To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following proposals for generating income to help maintain and improve the library service?

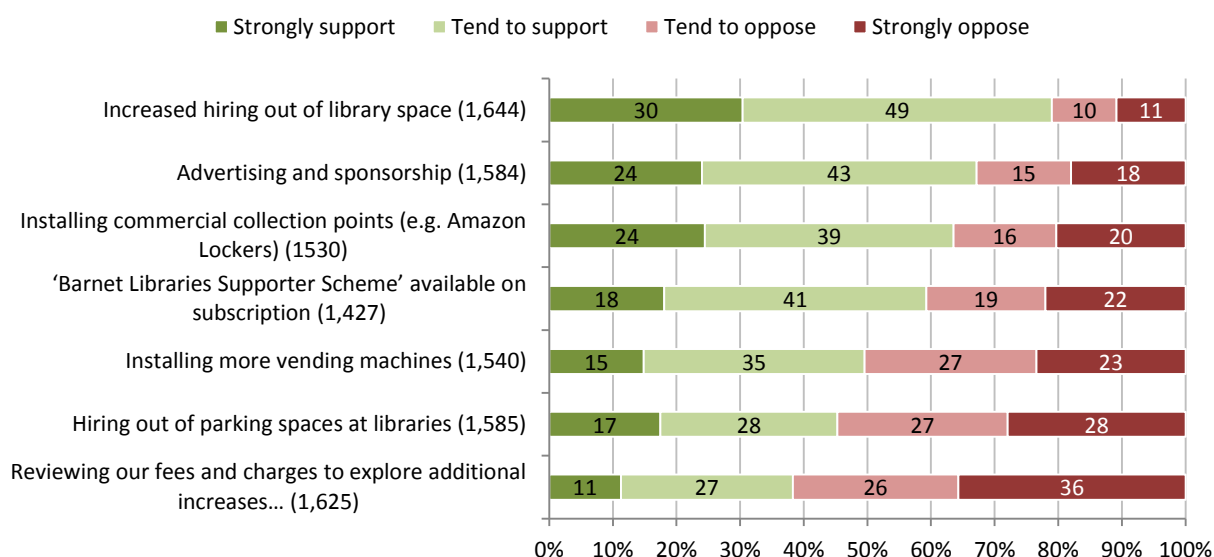
5.47 When presented with various proposals for generating income, more than half of respondents supported:

- Increased hiring out of library space (79%);
- Advertising and sponsorship (67%)
- Installing commercial collection points (e.g. Amazon lockers) (64%);
- ‘Barnet Libraries Supporters Scheme’ available on subscription (59%).

5.48 Fewer respondents (i.e. half or less than half) supported:

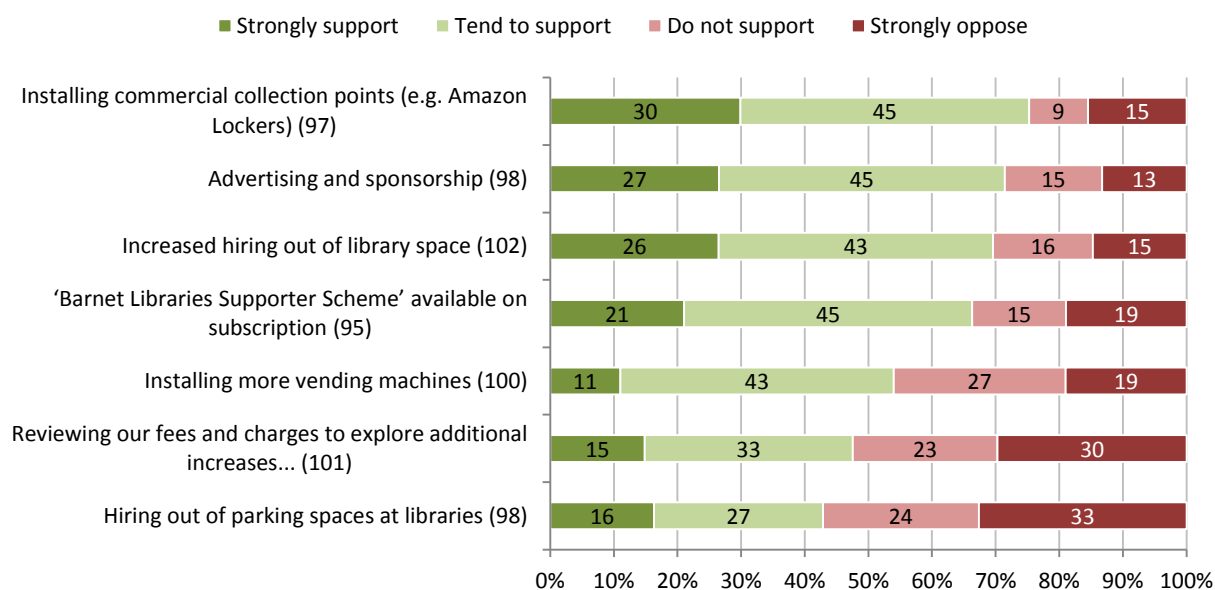
- Installing more vending machines (50%);
- Hiring out of parking spaces (45%);
- Reviewing fees and charges to explore additional increases (38%).

Figure 42: Levels of support and opposition for the income generation proposals (revised scale; online responses from 17.11.14 and all postal responses) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



5.49 The responses which were received prior to the options scale being changed follow a broadly similar pattern (see Figure 43 overleaf), albeit with slightly greater support for the ‘Barnet Libraries Supporter Scheme’ (66%) – though it is worth noting that these early results are based on much smaller numbers of responses.

Figure 43: Levels of support and opposition for the income generation proposals (original scale; online responses up to 17.11.14) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Do you have any other comments or alternative proposals for increasing income for the library service? If you don't support any of these approaches please say why.

5.50 The following points and views were made or expressed by more than a tenth of the 602 respondents who provided further comments about proposals for generating income:

- Agreement with hiring out library space (though sometimes with the caveat that this should not result in poorer quality of services) (17%);
- Comments about fines for children e.g. these should not be introduced as they may discourage reading; or they may increase revenue but any system would have to be introduced carefully and given close consideration (13%);
- Comments about introducing activities, events and classes into the library, for which a small amount could be charged (10%).

5.51 Additionally, around 8% of the respondents who commented felt that coffee shops or cafés could be located within libraries, perhaps in partnership with a high street chain or franchise. A similar proportion felt that small charges could be introduced for library users (joining or membership fees, for example) – though many qualified their comments by stating that these charges should not be allowed to adversely affect the poorest residents.

Figure 44: Further comments about proposals for increasing income (Base: 602 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Agree with increased hiring out of library space/could rent cheap space out for more events/activities/as long as it doesn't mean worse quality of library services	102	16.9
Disagree you should introduce fines for children/may discourage children to read/as long as it is done properly/may increase revenue	80	13.3
Introduce activities/events/educational classes within library/could charge small amount to increase library revenue	58	9.6

Need to open a coffee shop within library to bring in increased revenue/form partnership with Costa coffee for example	49	8.1
Introduce minimal charges to libraries/happy to pay small charges/could introduce annual membership fees/joining fees etc./happy to pay more for fines as long as it doesn't affect people who can't afford it	47	7.8
Disagree with hiring out parking spaces/this will cause less space for people who actually want to use library/may cause issues relating to disabled parking spaces/need more parking spaces not less	41	6.8
Disagree with proposed installation of more vending machines/vending machines are too unhealthy i.e. sugary/fatty foods etc.	41	6.8
Disagree with commercial collection points/commercial partnerships	37	6.1
Agree with commercial collection points/commercial partnerships	28	4.6
Agree with advertising and sponsorship/as long as it is done properly/may increase revenue	26	4.3
Increase council tax to keep library services	22	3.6
Need more information to make an informed decision/should be provided with more information about the specific proposals	20	3.3
Libraries should be kept running as they are/generally support proposal if they are kept the same	20	3.3
Libraries need to be kept free/could alienate some users who wouldn't be able to afford it	18	3.0
Don't agree with charging more for fines/additional charges/may deter some people from using the libraries altogether	18	3.0
Agree with proposed installation of more vending machines/if vending machines are too be installed need to have healthy options	17	2.8
Libraries should be properly funded/funded by the government to be kept running as they are	17	2.8
Disagree with the use of Amazon/they don't pay their taxes therefore not even contributing to anything	16	2.7
Disagree with advertising and sponsorship/don't want advertising all over the library	15	2.5
Disagree with increased hiring out of library space	14	2.3
Agree that libraries need money making schemes/think these proposals are a good way of making money/any way of making money for the library will help library	14	2.3
Cut high paid salaries/councillors expenses etc./use money for the libraries	14	2.3
Don't agree with proposal/proposals are discouraging/don't think they will work/been proposed before and didn't work	14	2.3
Agree you should introduce fines for children/stop people abusing the system	13	2.2
Should allow a donation scheme/donation boxes/being to donate books to library etc.	12	2.0
Co-locate a library with other services (gift shop, post office, crèche etc.)	11	1.8
Libraries could sell books/old stock to increase revenue	11	1.8
Savings could be made elsewhere	11	1.8
Libraries are an important community service/need to be run for the community/community should be benefitting from service	10	1.7
I don't think libraries should be run like a business	9	1.5
Library service shouldn't be about money/this is just a money making scheme	9	1.5
Proposed savings would be minimal/wouldn't make a real difference	8	1.3
Proposals will mean the library services will deteriorate over time/could affect the quality of library service if proposals are implemented	7	1.2
Current financial resources should be used better/there should be less wastage	7	1.2
We already pay enough council tax/shouldn't this cover the library service	6	1.0
Libraries need improved opening hours/better opening times to accommodate more people	6	1.0
Agree with hiring out parking spaces/could generate income	5	0.8
Friends Scheme/charging extra for some services	4	0.7

Libraries need to be better advertised/advertised properly to make people aware of services	4	0.7
Other	193	32.0

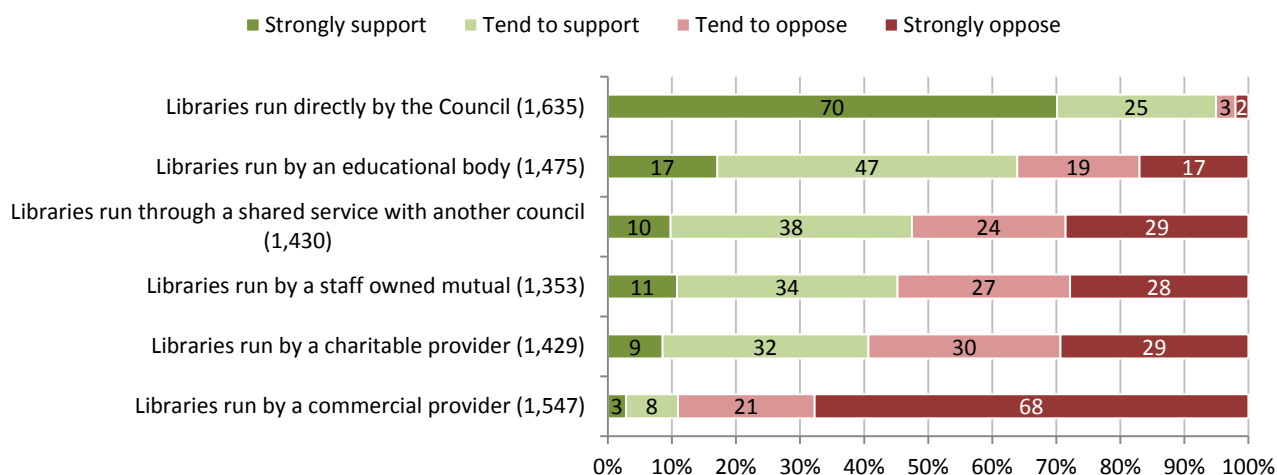
Alternative delivery models

To what extent do you support or oppose the potential delivery models that have been identified for the Library Service?

5.52 The results show a clear preference for libraries run directly by the Council (95% in support), followed by libraries run by an educational body (64%).

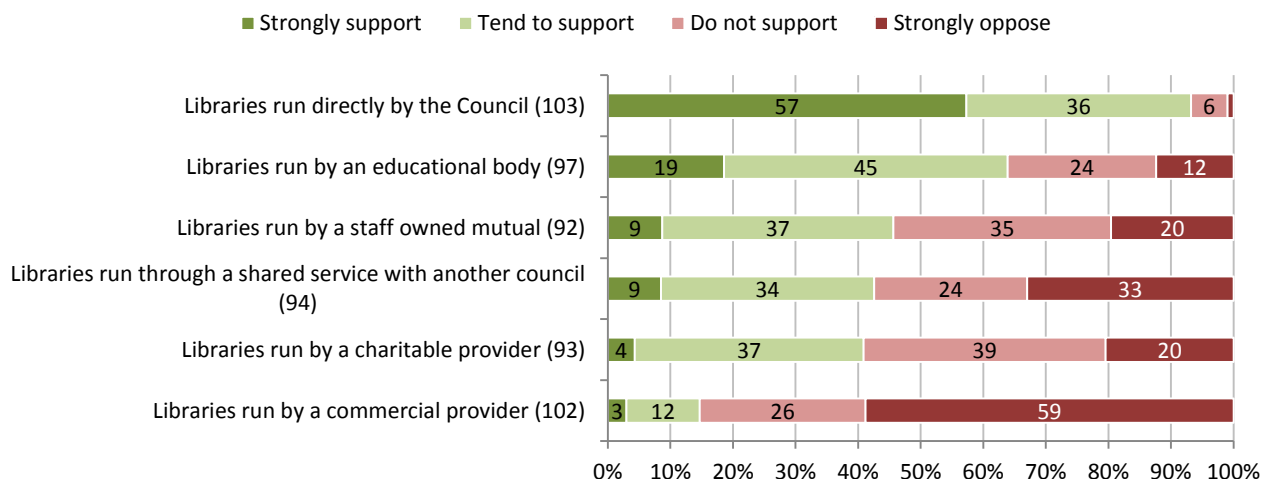
5.53 More than four fifths of respondents opposed libraries run by a commercial provider (89%).

Figure 45: Levels of support and opposition for the proposed delivery models (revised scale; online responses from 17.11.14 and all postal responses) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



5.54 Similarly, the results from before the scale change also show most support for libraries run directly by the Council (93%), with lowest support for libraries run by a commercial provider (15%).

Figure 46: Levels of support and opposition for the proposed delivery models (original scale; online responses up to 17.11.14) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Do you have any other comments to make about these delivery models?

- 5.55 When respondents were invited to provide further comments, the following points of view were expressed most often (by at least 7% of the 414 respondents providing comments):
- Disagreement that libraries should be run by a commercial provider/disagreement with commercialisation of library service (9%);
 - Not enough information has been provided about these delivery models to enable respondents to provide an educated answer (9%)
 - Libraries shouldn't be run by a commercial provider because it will be run like a business, or the provider will only be interested in profit (8%);
 - Libraries need to stay free/a non-profit facility (7%);
 - Disagreement with any cuts, and a feeling that libraries need to stay open and/or that savings should be made elsewhere (7%).
- 5.56 Some respondents mentioned the Council's legal obligation to provide a library service under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act, which was felt to be incompatible with outsourcing the service.
- 5.57 There was some feeling that sharing with another Council could work; however, a few respondents were sceptical, citing Barnet's shared legal service with London Borough of Harrow as an less successful example of a shared service with another council.

Figure 47: Further comments about maintaining the possible delivery models (Base: 414 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Disagree that libraries should be run by a commercial provider/disagree with commercialisation of library service	36	8.7
Not enough information provided/need more information to provide an educated answer	36	8.7
Libraries shouldn't be run by a commercial provider because it will be run like a business/only interested in profit	32	7.7
Libraries need to stay free/a non-profit facility	28	6.8
Don't agree with any cuts/libraries need to stay open/saving should be made elsewhere	28	6.8
As long as service is run properly is doesn't matter/quality and range of library services more important/as long as it provides good quality service	26	6.3
Libraries are an important community service/need to be run for the community/community should be benefitting from service	26	6.3
Disagree with proposals as we already pay tax/the tax we pay should cover these services/don't want to pay additional costs	26	6.3
Libraries need to be run be experienced/trained/qualified staff	23	5.6
Disagree with outsourcing as it has failed previously/facilities dropped since outsourced with Capita i.e. IT services.	19	4.6
Libraries shouldn't be run by a commercial provider because quality of service will suffer	17	4.1
Changes to service will lead to loss in service/sharing services would be too big to handle/eventually leading to deterioration in service	16	3.9
Disagree with privatisation of library service	15	3.6
Agree that libraries should be run by an educational body/think joined up service between library and educational facilities would be good	14	3.4

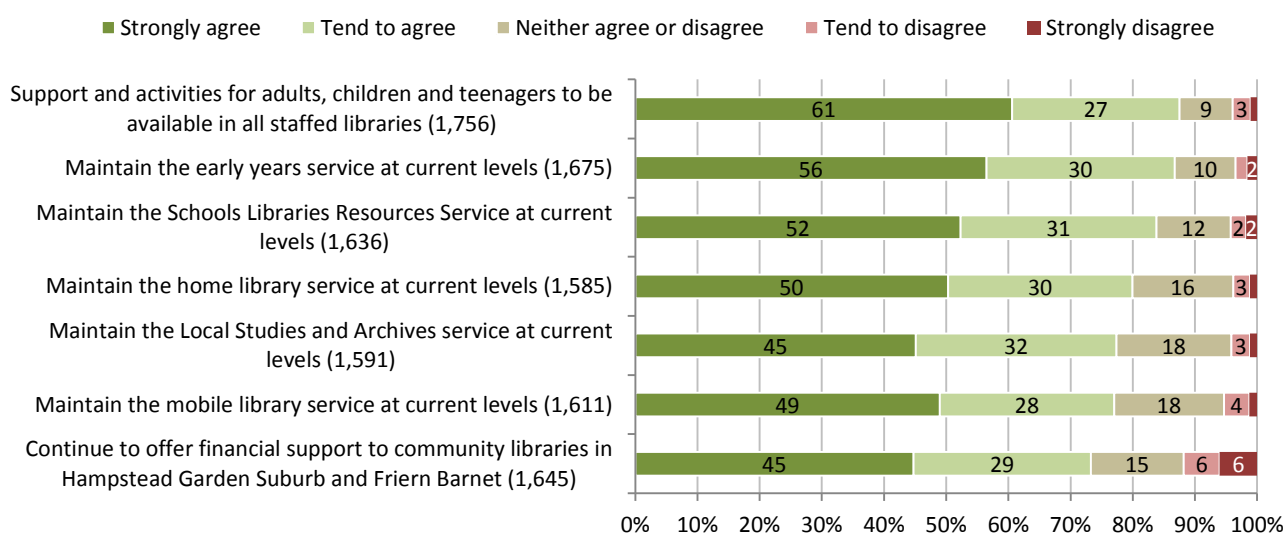
Proposed savings would be minimal/savings wouldn't be enough to make a difference	11	2.7
Disagree with proposed delivery models	8	1.9
Disagree that libraries should be run by a charitable provider	7	1.7
Agree that libraries should be run by a charitable provider	6	1.4
Libraries shouldn't be run by a charitable provider because quality of service will suffer	6	1.4
Questionnaire is biased/questions are leading/otherwise unhappy with consultation	6	1.4
Libraries need to free of political agendas/should be free of politics	6	1.4
Agree with proposed delivery models	5	1.2
Disagree that libraries should be run by an educational body	4	1.0
Libraries shouldn't be run by a charitable provider because it will be forced to run like a business	4	1.0
Agree that libraries should be run by a commercial provider	3	0.7
Disagree with proposals due to the fact different providers could influence stock/provide biased books	1	0.2
Other	157	37.9

Specific library services

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these objectives?

- 5.58 More than 7 out of 10 respondents agreed with each of the objectives.
- 5.59 In particular, 88% of respondents agreed with the objective for support and activities for adults, children and teenagers to be available in all staffed libraries, and 87% agreed with the objective to maintain the early years' service at current levels.
- 5.60 The lowest level of agreement was with the objective to continue to offer financial support to community libraries in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Friern Barnet, though this still had the support of 73% of respondents.

Figure 48: Levels of agreement and disagreement with the objectives for specific library services (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Do you have any other comments to make about maintaining these services or support?

- 5.61 When asked to comment further, 15% of respondents felt that LBB should maintain all of the services, or that they are all essential.
- 5.62 In a similar vein, 12% commented that there should be no cutbacks to the service (which many felt would lead to closures by the ‘back door’), or that the library service should be left as it is currently.
- 5.63 13% said they didn't know enough about the services or would need more information in order to be able to comment.

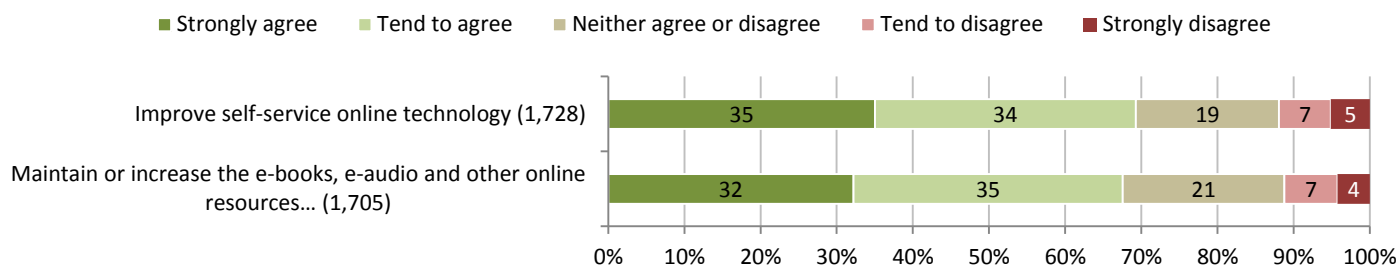
Figure 49: Further comments about objectives (Base: 292 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Maintain these services/they are all essential	45	15.4
Don't know enough about services/need more information about services	38	13.0
Don't want to be cut back on services/cut backs will lead to library closures/keep the whole library service as it is	34	11.6
Home and mobile library service important/home and mobile service needs to be improved not reduced	26	8.9
Libraries should be improved not just maintained/review these services to see if they could be improved	21	7.2
Do not agree with continuing to support community libraries/community libraries should become council libraries	19	6.5
Need appropriate staffing levels/don't reduce staff/reintroduce old staffing levels	18	6.2
Libraries are important for the community/community cohesion	17	5.8
Support and activities for adults, children and teenagers important	16	5.5
Continue to support community libraries	16	5.5
Libraries are vital for literacy/education	16	5.5
Keep services that support the most vulnerable people	12	4.1
Need increased funding from government/increase funding from alternative sources	11	3.8
Happy to pay minimal charge for library service/increase council tax to cover costs	8	2.7
Need to make appropriate use of volunteers/could make more use of volunteers	6	2.1
Disagree with continued support for school libraries/should be funding themselves	6	2.1
Savings need to be made elsewhere	5	1.7
Need to reduce waste within library service to save money i.e. cutting big salaries etc.	5	1.7
Questions are flawed/decisions already made	4	1.4
Studies and archives need to be maintained	4	1.4
Maintain the services that are most used/could cut services that are being used the least	2	0.7
Early years services important	2	0.7
Generally agree with proposals	2	0.7
Service for school libraries important	1	0.3
Other	105	36.0

To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following services should be expanded?

5.64 More than two thirds of respondents agreed that self-service online technology should be improved (69%), and that e-books, e-audio and other online resources or learning materials should be maintained or increased (68%).

Figure 50: Levels of agreement and disagreement with expanding particular services (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Do you have any other comments to make about the services that will be developed?

5.65 Out of those respondents who provided further comments, more than a tenth provided comments along the following lines:

- Technology in libraries needs to be improved i.e. to be able respondents to reserve books online, or to have more user friendly facilities etc. (16%);
- Not everyone will be able to use technology e.g. due to an inability to use computers, or not having access to computers or technology etc. (15%);
- Some people have a preference for ‘real’ books as opposed to e-books, and hard copies should therefore be available and/or libraries should have a good stock of books (15%);
- Staff are vital for libraries e.g. in terms of face to face contact and getting advice, and technology is not a suitable replacement for them (14%);
- Improving online services should not be at the cost of losing existing or traditional library services; it should be done to supplement the current service (13%);
- General agreement that these services should be developed (12%).

Figure 51: Further comments about objectives (Base: 348 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Technology in libraries needs to be improved i.e. being able to reserve books online/more user friendly facilities etc.	55	15.8
Not everyone uses computers or technology i.e. inability to use computers/not having access to computers or technology etc.	53	15.2
Prefer real books to e-books/hard copy should be available/libraries should have a good stock of books	52	14.9
Staff are vital for libraries/face to face contact/getting advice from fully trained staff/technology is not a replacement for staff	50	14.4

Improving online services should not be at the cost of losing existing or traditional library services/it should be additional to current service	44	12.6
Generally agree with developing these services	43	12.4
Need to improve e-book service/introduce a e-book lending service/could charge a small amount to borrow e-book/better variety of books available on e-books	19	5.5
Don't want any cuts in library service/this is just a cover so the library service can be cut	14	4.0
Libraries are good as they are/keep the libraries as they are/current level of online service is good as it is	13	3.7
Need more information about service/don't know enough to say	12	3.4
Libraries are important for providing people access to computer facilities	12	3.4
Libraries are important for children/getting children to enjoy a love of books	12	3.4
Libraries are important for people in deprived area/people who are in most need	11	3.2
Generally disagree with developing these services	9	2.6
Need to teach people how to use online facilities i.e. provide classes for elderly etc.	7	2.0
Libraries are important for local community/provide community space for facilities/activities etc.	6	1.7
Libraries are important for education/providing facilities for people to learn	5	1.4
Not everyone is interested in using computers or technology	4	1.1
The more online the library goes the less people with physical go to the library	2	0.6
Decisions have already made/this is just a fake exercise	2	0.6
Other	114	32.8

Do you have any alternative proposals for changes we could make to the library service?

- 5.66 Comments about increasing the services provided at libraries (e.g. making more creative use of space through evening classes, reading groups, other activities etc.) were made by 11% of the respondents who commented.
- 5.67 Roughly the same proportion advocated increasing revenue by hiring out the space to businesses, or co-locating services in a 'community hub'.
- 5.68 16% of respondents who provided further comments stated they didn't want any cuts/any libraries to close, or that libraries are essential and need to be kept as they are.

Figure 52: Further comments about alternative proposals that could be made to the library services (Base: 293 panellists who provided comments)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Don't want any cuts in library service/don't want any libraries to close/libraries are essential/keep them as they are	48	16.4
Increase use of libraries by providing other services/more creative use of space i.e. evening classes/reading groups/activities etc./will increase revenue/footfall	31	10.6
Increase revenue by renting out library space to businesses/co-location of services in community hub model e.g. café/small shop/GP surgeries etc.	31	10.6
Keep libraries staffed/need professional/qualified staff/face to face contact/appropriate staffing levels	27	9.2
Better funding/better funding from outside sources	21	7.2
Better computer/online facilities in library needed	19	6.5
Cut high paid salaries/councillors' expenses etc./use money for the libraries	17	5.8
Introduce minimal charges to libraries/happy to pay small charges/happy to pay more for	14	4.8

finer/could introduce annual membership fees/joining fees etc.		
Libraries are important for local community/community hub/provide community space for facilities/activities etc.	14	4.8
Increase council tax to keep library services/willing to pay more council tax for library services	12	4.1
Libraries need a good variety of stock	11	3.8
Better advertising of services	10	3.4
More educational opportunities e.g. links with schools	9	3.1
Questionnaire is biased/decisions have already made	9	3.1
Need to expand library services/facilities in general	8	2.7
Savings should be made elsewhere/could cut other services instead/libraries should be priority	8	2.7
Need a better consultation process/more community input needed with regards to proposals/should be listening to staff of libraries	6	2.0
Agree with the use of volunteers/volunteers could save money	6	2.0
Agree with commercial collection points i.e. Amazon Lockers/could provide increased revenue	6	2.0
Agree with the use of technology	6	2.0
Libraries are important for children/getting children to enjoy a love of books	6	2.0
Agree with the use of e-books/provide better variety of e-books/introduce a e-book lending service/could charge a small amount to borrow e-book	5	1.7
Better opening/closing times/days i.e. open on a Sunday etc.	4	1.4
Encourage people to donate books/provide a donation scheme/donation boxes etc.	4	1.4
Disagree with the use of technology	4	1.4
Libraries need to join up with other libraries/more joined up services provided will enable better quality of service	4	1.4
Libraries are important for elderly/vulnerable/disabled people in the area/provides them with access to local facilities	3	1.0
Reduce/close unneeded library services to focus on other libraries	3	1.0
Need to get rid of CDs/DVDs in favour of books	2	0.7
Copy model provided by other libraries e.g. Tower Hamlets	2	0.7
Disagree with the use of volunteers	1	0.3
Libraries need the ability to reserve/order books online i.e. click and collect	1	0.3
Generally disagree with reducing space/540 sq ft is too small	1	0.3
Disagree with the use of e-books/don't want only e-books available	1	0.3
Not enough detail given/need more information on proposals	1	0.3

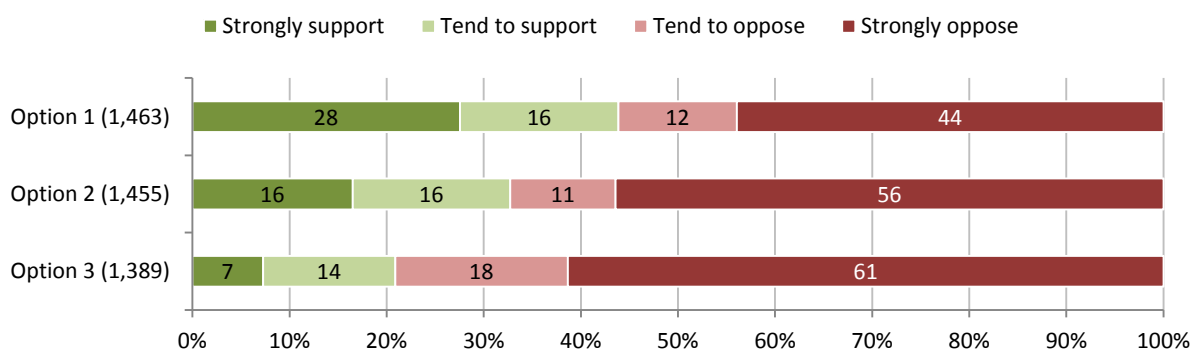
Options

To what extent do you support or oppose these options?

5.69 There was somewhat more support for Option 1 (44%) than for Option 2 (33%) or Option 3 (21%).

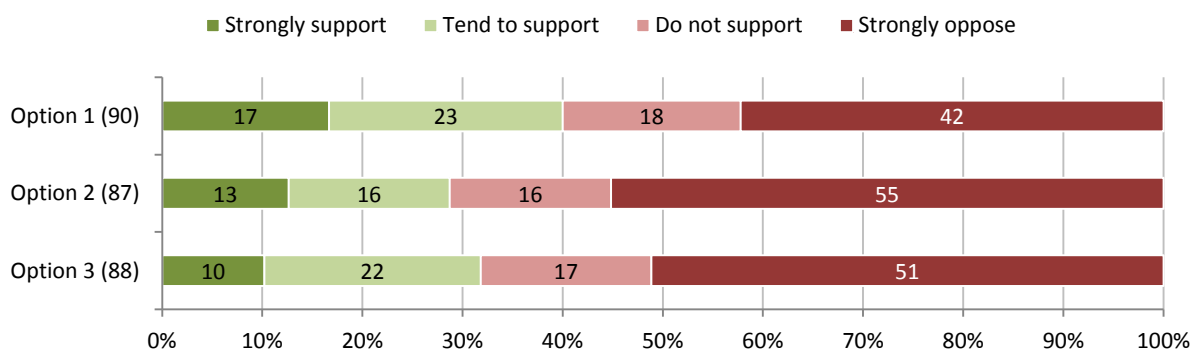
5.70 However, all three of the options were opposed by the majority of respondents, and both Options 2 and 3 were *strongly* opposed by an absolute majority (56% and 61% of respondents respectively).

Figure 53: Levels of support and opposition for the three options (revised scale; online responses from 17.11.14 and all postal responses) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



5.71 The results from before the scale changed again show that the majority of respondents were unsupportive of the options; however, at this stage Option 3 was marginally better supported than Option 2.

Figure 54: Levels of support and opposition for the three options (original scale; online responses up to 17.11.14) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



*Which of these options do you think is most appropriate for the library service in Barnet?
(Please rank each option according to importance: cross a box between 1 and 4, 1 being most appropriate and 4 being least appropriate. Please use each value only once. You do not have to rank all options)*

- 5.72 Respondents were also encouraged to rank the options on a scale according to how appropriate they felt them to be.
- 5.73 Initially respondents only had the opportunity to rank the 3 options outlined by LBB. However, from 17th November 2014 respondents could also rank a possible alternative option, and provide details of this option in a comments box.
- 5.74 The results for before and after this change are again presented separately, and it is worth noting that this question was again not very widely answered (perhaps because respondents disagreed with all of the options).
- 5.75 In the period after the question was revised, 42% of respondents selected ‘another option’ as their most appropriate, and 33% selected Option 1.
- 5.76 Only 5% of respondents felt Option 3 would be most appropriate.

Figure 55: Respondents’ rankings for the options (revised question; online responses from 17.11.14 and all postal responses)

			Option			
			Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Another option
OVERALL		n	%	%	%	%
Rank	1 – most appropriate	688	33.1	19.0	5.5	42.4
	2	657	30.7	34.6	32.3	2.4
	3	627	20.1	28.0	47.3	4.6
	4 – least appropriate	594	14.1	28.3	35.9	21.7

- 5.77 There was relatively little difference in terms of respondents’ preferences for the three options prior to the point where the question was altered. Each option was deemed to be the most appropriate by around a third of respondents.

Figure 56: Respondents’ rankings for the options (original question; online responses up to 17.11.14)

			Option		
			Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
OVERALL		n	%	%	%
Rank	1 – most appropriate	66	32.9	31.4	35.7
	2	68	35.4	32.3	32.3
	3 – least appropriate	68	29.9	37.3	32.8

Do you have any other comments to make about these options or any other option the Council could consider for the service? If you chose 'another option' above, please tell us about your proposals here.

- 5.78 Comments which expressed general disagreement with and lack of support for any of the options were made by 38% of respondents.
- 5.79 A similar proportion expressed the view that they did not want any cuts in the library service and/or that libraries should be kept as they are (34%).
- 5.80 A very wide variety of other specific points were made, and these are summarised in Figure 57 below. Some of the main possible alternatives which were raised were as follows:
- Increasing council tax (and a number of respondents stated they would be prepared to pay more council tax) (4%);
 - Making savings elsewhere and/or cutting other services instead (4%);
 - Increasing revenue by renting out library space (3%).
- 5.81 There was also some criticism of the questionnaire and engagement process (e.g. accusations of bias or predetermination of decisions) (4%), along with calls for an improved consultation process with more input from staff and the community (2%).

Figure 57: Further comments about the options or any other options the Council could consider (Base: 804 respondents who provided comments)

Coded comment	n	% (Valid)
Disagree/don't support any of these options	305	37.9
Don't want any cuts in library service/don't want any libraries to close/libraries are essential/keep them as they are	275	34.2
Generally disagree with reducing space/540 sq ft is too small	71	8.8
Libraries are important for local community/provide community space for facilities/activities etc.	58	7.2
Libraries need appropriately trained/qualified staff	51	6.3
Increase council tax to keep library services/willing to pay more council tax for library services	46	5.7
Do not close/relocate East Finchley library	45	5.6
Questionnaire is biased/decisions have already made	35	4.4
Savings should be made elsewhere/could cut other services instead	35	4.4
Libraries are important for education/providing facilities for people to learn	32	4.0
Generally disagree with unstaffed libraries	28	3.5
Generally disagree with 30 minute travelling time/30 minutes is too long to travel	27	3.4
Increase revenue by renting out library space for other services i.e. evening classes/reading groups etc.	26	3.2
Need alternative methods of increasing revenue/need to increase revenue in other ways (non-specific)	25	3.1
Options will lead to a reduced/poor service/options will cause a deterioration in library service	24	3.0
Disagree with the use of volunteers	23	2.9
Generally disagree with 30 minute travelling time/libraries need to be in walking distance	23	2.9
Cut high paid salaries/councillors' expenses etc./use money for the libraries	22	2.7

Libraries are important for children/getting children to enjoy a love of books	22	2.7
Councils should be responsible for properly funding libraries/should invest more in libraries	21	2.6
Need a better consultation process/more community input needed with regards to proposals/should be listening to staff of libraries	20	2.5
Need more information about options/proposals/not enough information to make an informed decision	19	2.4
Increase revenue by renting out library space to businesses i.e. café/shops etc.	19	2.4
Agree with the use of volunteers/volunteers could save money	18	2.2
Need to expand the library/need to make the libraries bigger	17	2.1
Disagree with option 2	15	1.9
Disagree with options are will lead to unsafe libraries	15	1.9
Libraries are important for people in deprived area/people who are in most need	15	1.9
Reduce opening times/hours to save money	14	1.7
Introduce minimal charges to libraries/happy to pay small charges/happy to pay more for fines/could introduce annual	14	1.7
Disagree with option 3	13	1.6
Agree with the use of technology	12	1.5
Libraries need good/better variety of stock	11	1.4
Disagree with 30 minute travelling time as it will difficult for vulnerable/elderly/disabled people to get to	11	1.4
Libraries should form partnerships with businesses/seek corporate sponsorships	10	1.2
Do not close/relocate South Friern library	10	1.2
Disagree with option 1	9	1.1
Reduce staffing/staffing hours to save money	9	1.1
Libraries are vital for elderly people/will impact negatively on elderly people/provides a place for them to go/interact	9	1.1
Don't want libraries opening times/hours reduced	8	1.0
Proposed savings would be minimal/savings wouldn't be enough to make a difference	8	1.0
Proposals need to be re-thought/go back to the drawing board	8	1.0
Do not close/relocate Childs Hill library	8	1.0
Do not close/relocate Mill Hill library	8	1.0
Agree with option 1	7	0.9
Do not close/relocate East Barnet library	7	0.9
Disagree with proposals as we already pay tax/the tax we pay should cover these services/don't want to pay additional costs	6	0.7
Do not close/relocate Osidge library	6	0.7
Agree with option 2	5	0.6
Generally agree with reducing space/540 sq ft will be fine	5	0.6
This is a move towards closing libraries/libraries will not re-open when they close	5	0.6
Agree with community run libraries/need to give the libraries to the community to run	5	0.6
Do not close/relocate Edgware library	5	0.6
Options will lead to library closures	4	0.5
Proposals will result in reduced usage of libraries/not as many people using libraries	4	0.5
Do not close/relocate Burnt Oak library	3	0.4
Disagree with reducing space/540 sq ft is too small for disabled access i.e. problems relating to wheelchair use.	3	0.4
Agree/support all these options	2	0.2
Agree with option 3	2	0.2

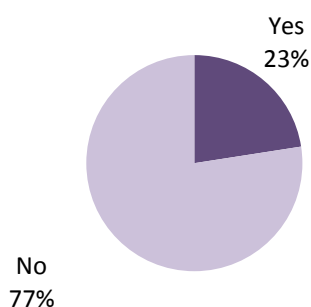
Reduce amount of stock to save money/sell off stock to make money	2	0.2
Libraries aren't that expensive to run/councils have enough money to run libraries	2	0.2
Disagree with the use of technology	2	0.2
Do not close/relocate Church End library	2	0.2
Do not close/relocate Grahame Park (Colindale) library	2	0.2
Do not close/relocate Hendon library	2	0.2
Do not close/relocate North Finchley library	1	0.1
Disagree as this is just a money making scheme/financial motivated	1	0.1
Other	157	19.5

Volunteering

Would you be interested in volunteering to help with activities in Barnet libraries?

5.82 Less than a quarter (23%) of respondents said they would be interested in volunteering to help with activities; just over three quarters (77%) would not be interested.

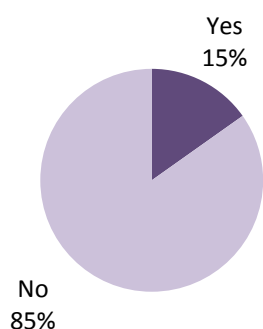
Figure 58: Whether respondents would be interested in volunteering to help with activities (Base: 1,743)



Would you be interested in being involved in running a community library?

5.83 Less than a fifth (15%) of respondents would be interested in being involved in running a community library; the remaining 85% would not be interested.

Figure 59: Whether respondents would be interested in being involved in running a community library (Base: 1,738)



5.84 The final chapters which follow outline the key aspects of the responses to the remaining questionnaires.

6. Easy read questionnaire

- 6.1 An Easy Read version of the main consultation questionnaire was produced, and made available online and in hard copy during the consultation period.
- 6.2 Two individuals completed the Easy Read questionnaire: one of these was a current library user and the other was a former library user.

Plans for Barnet’s future library service

- 6.3 One agreed with using technology to extend opening hours, while the other neither agreed nor disagreed on the basis that they would be happy with longer hours, but would not want there to be no staff.
- 6.4 Both individuals said they would be ‘quite unhappy’ about using a library without staff being there, with one adding that they would be ‘*worried to be alone with strangers*’.
- 6.5 One respondent indicated that nothing would make them more likely to visit an unstaffed library, while the other mentioned having other people there whom they could trust.
- 6.6 The respondents were asked whom they would most like and least like to run libraries. The two most preferred options were the council and a college or university. The two least preferred were a charity and a private company.

3 options for Barnet libraries

- 6.7 Both of the respondents ‘tended to agree’ with Option 1 and Option 2. One respondent tended to agree with Option 3, although the other tended to disagree.
- 6.8 One respondent preferred Option 1 overall, while the other preferred Option 3. It is worth noting that – unlike the main open questionnaire – the Easy Read version did not provide details about which libraries might be affected under each of the options, so it is difficult to know the extent to which respondents were answering from a fully informed perspective.
- 6.9 Both respondents ‘tended to agree’ with plans for having more volunteers.

7. Staff questionnaire

- 7.1 The questionnaire yielded 88 responses from members of staff between 23rd December 2014 and the end of the consultation period.
- 7.2 Respondents were asked where they work most often. The responses ranged widely across the service, although the most commonly mentioned sites were Hendon Library (15 respondents), the North London Business Park (14 respondents) and Chipping Barnet (12 responses).

Note: Changes to support/oppose scale

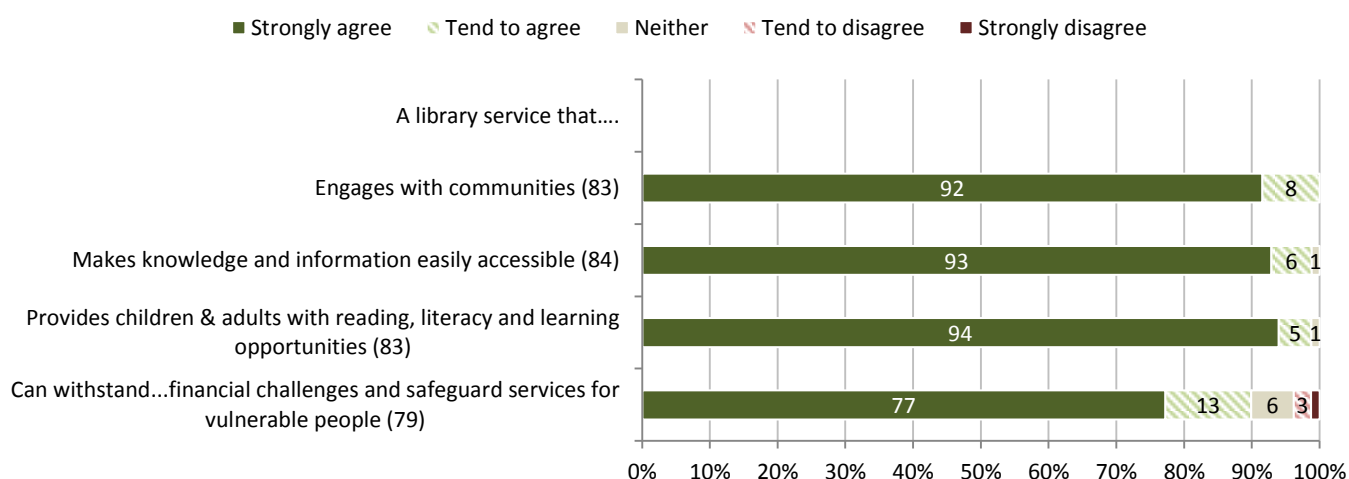
- 7.3 A number of questions in the consultation questionnaire asked respondents about the extent to which they supported or opposed various proposals. When fieldwork started, respondents were able to choose options on the following 5-point scale: *Strongly support, Tend to support, Do not support, Tend to oppose and Strongly oppose*.
- 7.4 On January 14th 2015), the *Do not support* option was removed with the dual intention of making the scale both more balanced and more consistent with the other quantitative strands. Results from before and after this change have been reported separately when displaying full results for any questions where this scale was used.

The future library service

Outcomes and objectives

- 7.5 Significant majorities of respondents agreed with each of the objectives. In particular, all 83 individuals who responded to the question agreed with the proposal for a library service that engages with communities.

Figure 60: Levels of agreement and disagreement with the four objectives (Base: All staff; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Further comments about outcomes and objectives

- 7.6 Respondents were also invited to provide further comments. There were many comments reflecting the view that the objectives are all appropriate, or even essential:

All these objectives encapsulate the library service we have now and should have in the future.

- 7.7 However, many respondents struggled to see how the proposals for the library service were compatible with these objectives:

I don't believe that the current options will allow these objectives to be met. The sheer scale of the cuts to the library service would make this impossible.

How can any of the objectives be achieved by reducing the size or number of libraries?

- 7.8 There was also some concern about the design of the question and whether agreeing with the objectives might lead to unintended consequences:

We are obliged to agree with these objectives as they are the nature of the service we have always provided, but I am not willing to strongly agree with them and risk a 50% staff cut, as I do not believe this is the way forward.

You're blatantly guiding us towards response you want. No one would argue with any of the above objectives...

- 7.9 The following three further or alternative objectives were also suggested:

A library service that supports the vulnerable members of our society, particularly focussing on digital inclusion, IT skills enhancement and training, and improving access to IT for the purposes of supporting e-governance, universal credit application and job seeking and re-training.

A library that is adaptable and reflects the technological changes of the 21st century.

A library service that is protected from the latest trends or what is in vogue with the current elected representatives of the council, who are trying to impress with their project management skills.

- 7.10 The fourth and final objective did also attract a small amount of criticism on the grounds that it was inappropriate to 'bundle' together financial challenges and vulnerable people, and that there was no definition of 'vulnerable'. One respondent felt this objective should apply to all, not just the vulnerable.

What could change?

- 7.11 Significant majorities of respondents were opposed to each of the proposed options to save money. There was particularly significant opposition or lack of support (above 90%) for, unstaffed opening (with a reduction in staffed opening hours), reducing the size of libraries, reducing staffed opening hours (by up to 50%), closing six libraries, and community run libraries.

Figure 61: Levels of support and opposition for the proposals (revised scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)

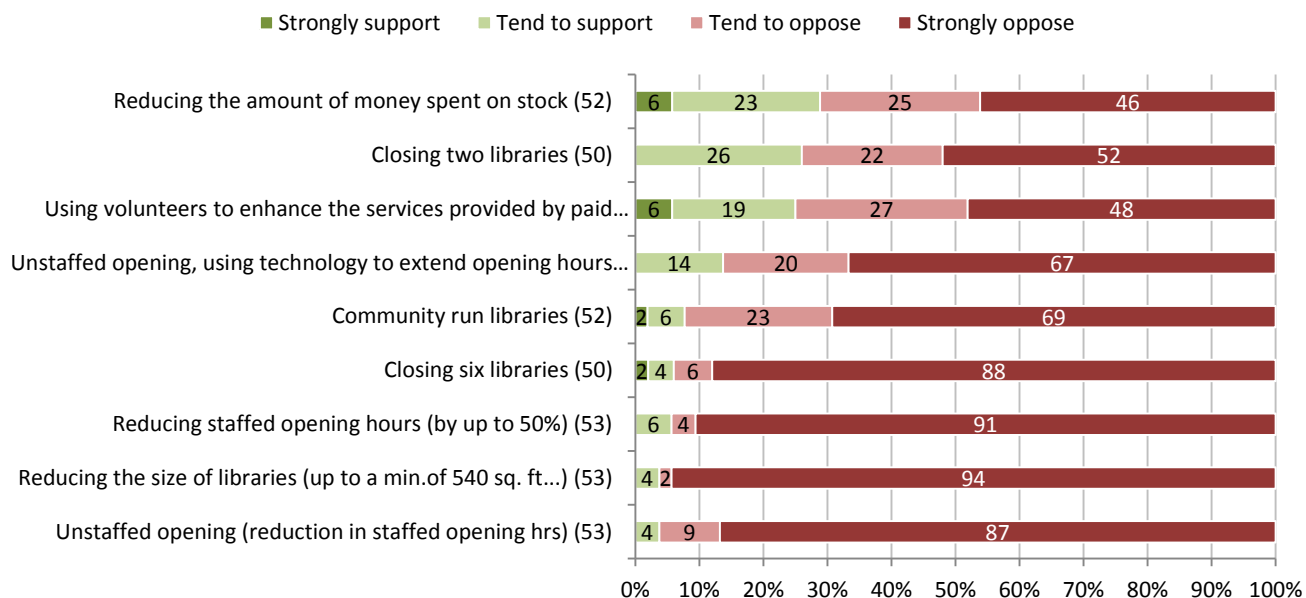
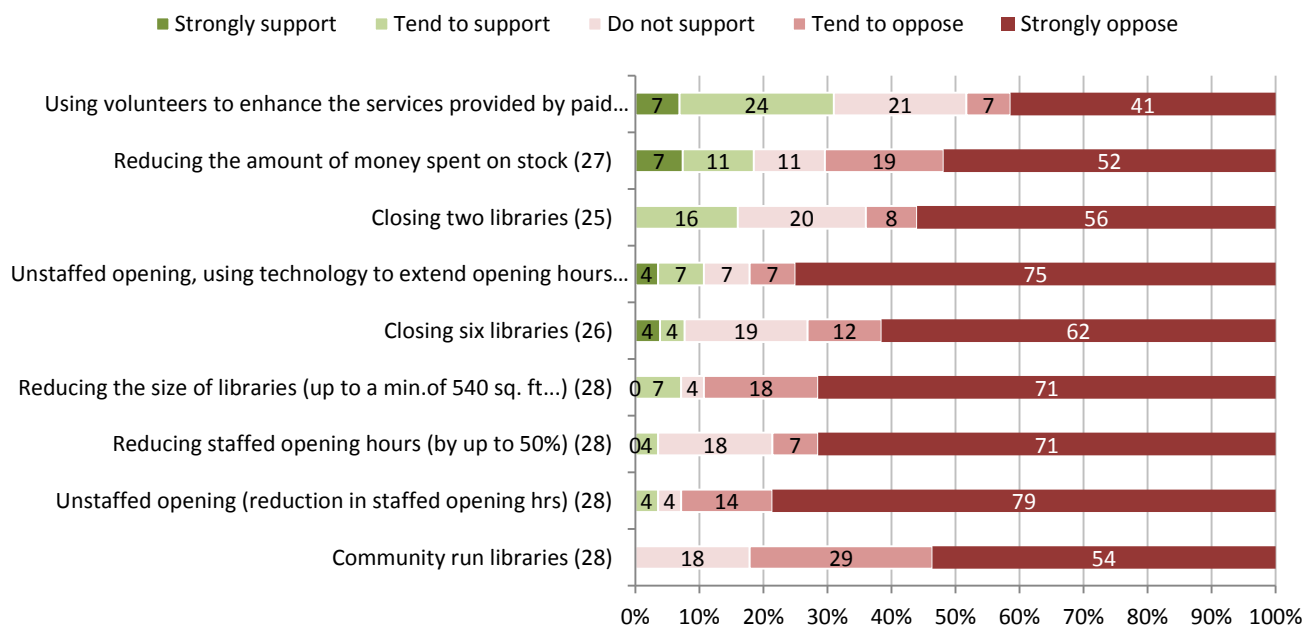


Figure 62: Levels of support and opposition for the proposals (original scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Further comments about the proposals

- 7.12 The comments showed very little support in general for either reduced floor space or unstaffed opening. There were concerns about the kinds of activities and facilities which could no longer be accommodated if the library space was reduced e.g. computers and study space, class visits, 'rhyme time', author events, book group meetings etc.
- 7.13 While there was opposition to closures, a few respondents felt that closing some libraries would be preferable, on the proviso that this would mean the remainder of the network could be maintained at the current level or improved. Respondents suggested that having a large number of unstaffed sites would ultimately lead to closures anyway, as the negative effect on the quality of the service at these libraries would decrease footfall and erode their long-term viability.
- 7.14 While there were some supportive comments about the use of volunteers to fulfil specific or basic tasks, there was also a feeling that volunteers should not and could not replace paid staff. Some focused on whether it was reasonable to expect inexperienced, unpaid volunteers to fulfil the more challenging or specialist aspects of a librarian's role e.g. assisting users with diverse physical and mental health problems; providing IT support (particularly to the elderly); information management; and dealing with disputes and other fraught situations.
- 7.15 Respondents provided anecdotes about the problems of retaining volunteers e.g. many leaving to take up paid work, or because they lacked commitment to the role. It was felt that this high turnover of individuals (combined with the limited number of hours most volunteers are able to commit to) would lead to few volunteers ever gaining the experience needed to fulfil the roles of paid staff. It was felt that new volunteers would need to be recruited and trained almost continuously, which would have cost and time implications.
- 7.16 Although some respondents felt the amount of budget allocated to stock was already tight, there was some perception that the process of purchasing stock could be better managed e.g. by giving more autonomy to librarians at individual branches to arrange purchases, or having some sort of borough-wide collection of stock. There were negative comments about the current situation e.g. duplication of titles, and some sense of frustration about instances of having to get rid of books that were in perfectly good condition in order to accommodate the new stock coming in.

Staffed opening times

- 7.17 Respondents were invited to rank the days and times when in order of when they felt it was most important for libraries to be staffed.
- 7.18 In terms of first preferences there was clear support for Saturdays and Mondays, and least support for Sundays. There was also comparatively little support for after 8pm, with most support for late mornings through to early evenings.
- 7.19 However, only a minority of respondents provided an answer to the questions asking them to prioritise particular days or times for staffed opening, and the comments provided give some indication of the reasons why.

Further comments about library opening times

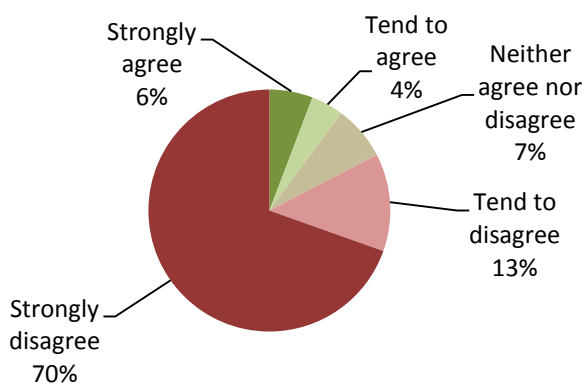
- 7.20 Many thought that the questions could give rise to misleading data, by implying that staff approved of reduced staffed opening hours when they opposed any change. There was some frustration that it was not possible to indicate that several days were equally important. Some comments focused on the need to provide reasonable access to all.
- 7.21 There was, however, some emphasis on the need to provide a ‘core’ service during the working week (from either 9am-5pm or 10am-6pm), although equally there was support for other time slots. Some expressed a view that the library should not be open if it was not staffed.
- 7.22 Although the ranking question suggested less support in general for Sunday opening, the further comments showed some difference of opinion as to whether or not Sunday opening was important. One respondent claimed there was a demand for *increased* Sunday opening, while another suggested that the service needs to be responsive to the different demands across different local communities. For example, suggested that libraries which serve areas with large Jewish communities should open on Sundays in order to meet the needs of this group.
- 7.23 Although the ranking question results implied strong support for Saturday opening, a couple of respondents identified this as a quiet day, and one respondent claimed that it can be difficult to predict when libraries will be busy as the pattern of use is often surprising. One made the point that quieter periods allowed staff to catch up with particular jobs e.g. shelving – the implication being that staff would still be required to carry out certain tasks even if the library was less busy.
- 7.24 Only 1 in 10 respondents agreed that the approach to extending library opening hours is suitable for Barnet’s library service, while more than 8 out of 10 disagreed (83%).

‘Open’ libraries

The use of technology can now allow the council to open and close a library without any staff being on site. Visitors would access the library during unstaffed periods by scanning their library card and entering a PIN. Once inside they would be able to use self-serve technology to borrow and return items, use computers, print and copy. CCTV would provide additional security.

- 7.25 Only 1 in 10 respondents agreed that the approach to extending library opening hours is suitable for Barnet’s library service, while more than 8 out of 10 disagreed (83%).

Figure 63: Responses to the potential approach for extending opening hours (Base: 69)



Further comments about ‘open’ libraries

- 7.26 Respondents provided a number of comments in relation to the ‘open’ library model, which were overwhelmingly critical of the proposals and raised a number of concerns, mainly in relation to security and public safety.
- 7.27 Some felt that the open library model might be appropriate for universities or other ‘closed’ communities, but had concerns about its suitability for a public library in a ‘*diverse and unpredictable metropolis*’. CCTV was widely felt to be an inadequate security measure, particularly if this was not going to be monitored in ‘real time’.
- 7.28 Concerns were raised that the safety of users – and particularly those who are ‘vulnerable’ - might be compromised. There was some suggestion that children might access the library unsupervised (e.g. by getting hold of an adult’s swipe card/PIN) and be placed at risk, or that users might stay away completely due to feeling unsafe.
- 7.29 A few respondents cited examples of incidents in libraries where staff which required staff to intervene (e.g. medical emergencies, anti-social or criminal behaviour, altercations etc.) and queried what would happen in situations like these in the future if the library was empty or unstaffed.
- 7.30 Other respondents doubted whether all users (particularly the elderly) would be able to use the technology on their own, without any staff assistance to call upon. There were also concerns about the reliability of the equipment and the inability of staff to ‘troubleshoot’ problems during unstaffed hours.
- 7.31 There was also scepticism about how far the approach would save money. These comments tended to be based on assumptions about the cost of introducing the new technology and the risks of having to replace stock and equipment as a result of damage or theft.

Relocation and redevelopment of library sites

- 7.32 At least half of respondents supported redeveloping library sites; building a new library as part of a new development near to the existing site; moving the library into an existing, accessible venue, near to the current site; and moving the library into an alternative, nearby, accessible Council or public sector partner building.
- 7.33 Less than half supported moving a library into a nearby ‘community hub’, moving a smaller library into a nearby property leased from another landowner, or moving a children’s library into a children’s centre or alternative community venue.

Figure 64: Levels of support and opposition for the relocation and redevelopment proposals (revised scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)

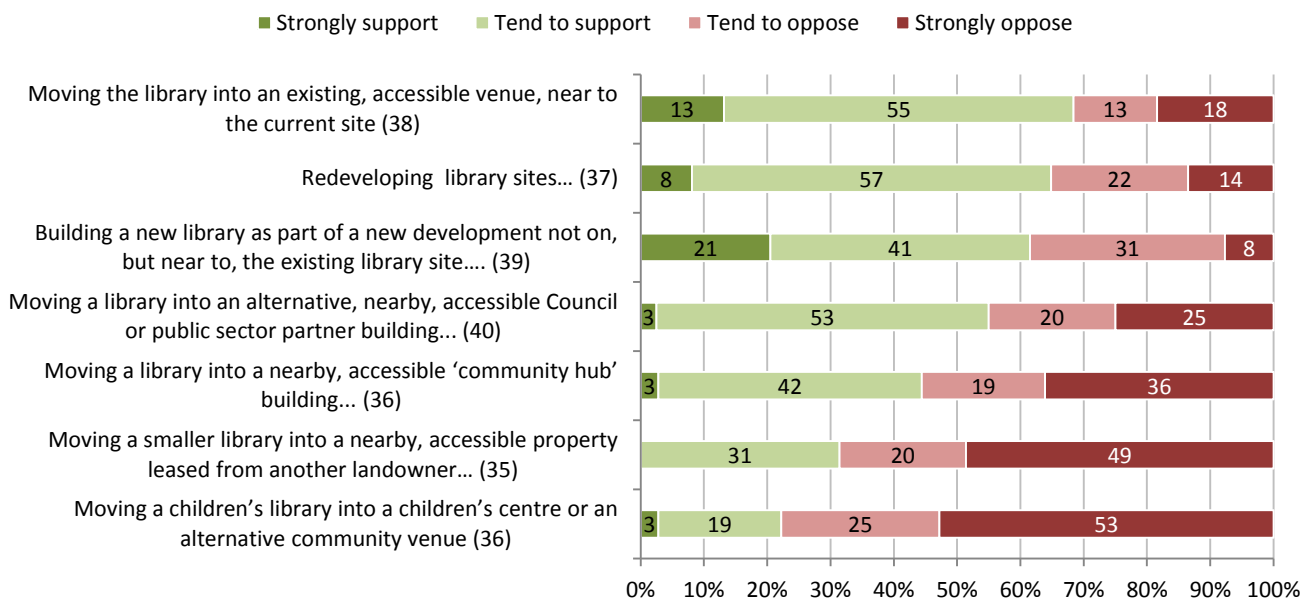
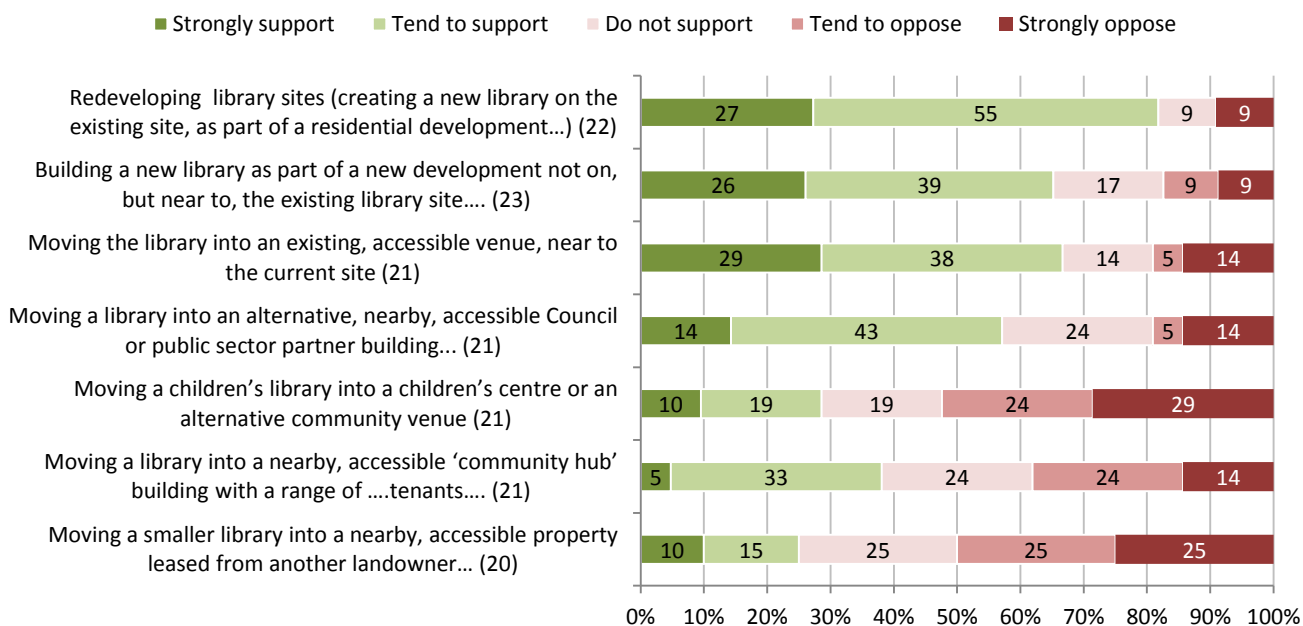


Figure 65: Levels of support and opposition for the relocation and redevelopment proposals (original scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Further comments about relocation and redevelopment

- 7.34 While a couple of respondents felt that libraries ought to be standalone buildings, others were more supportive about co-locating with other services. However, respondents foresaw some complications e.g. conflicts around public access requirements, health and safety, contractual issues, etc.
- 7.35 Others felt that the terms of any partnership or move to a shared location would need to be beneficial to the library e.g. the design and focus of the building should not be too geared towards the building’s

other functions, which the library as a kind of ‘afterthought’. The need to ensure adequate space within the library was also emphasised.

- 7.36 Some respondents expressed support in principle for a view that libraries should be located close to shopping areas, high streets, schools and transport hubs. One supported the redevelopment of existing sites to include housing alongside a smaller library.
- 7.37 Some respondents disagreed with moving children’s libraries into children’s centres on the grounds that children’s section was a key component of a library, and removing it would make libraries less family friendly and erode their function as a ‘cradle to grave’ service. One respondent suggested there were not enough children’s centres to absorb this part of the service; another said that the space in children’s centres is limited.
- 7.38 There was some scepticism about whether any of the proposals would ever come to fruition or actually save money, due to the costs associated with redeveloping buildings (including problems associated with the age of the buildings) and relocation. There was also some suggestion that the proposals would be a façade to justify closures and downsizing.
- 7.39 Others felt that it was difficult to answer without more information or more specific proposals.

Generating income

- 7.40 There was reasonable amount of support for each of the proposals for generating income, although there was widest support for increased hiring out of library space, and also fairly widespread support for advertising and sponsorship.

Figure 66: Levels of support and opposition for the income generation proposals (revised scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)

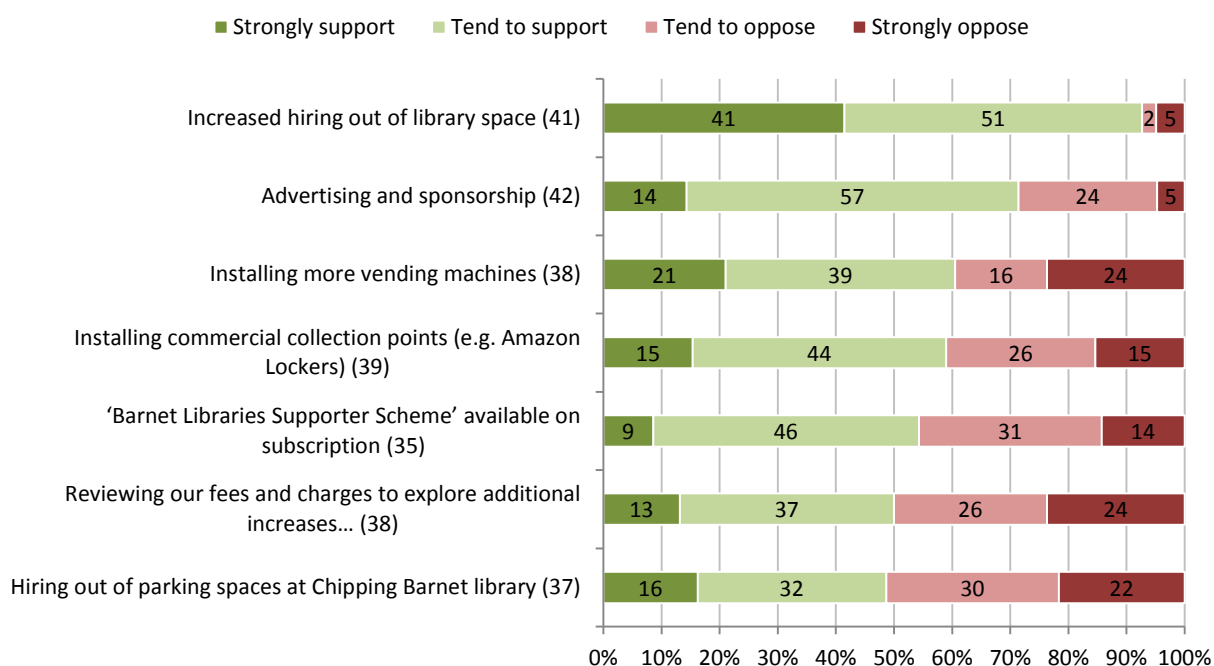
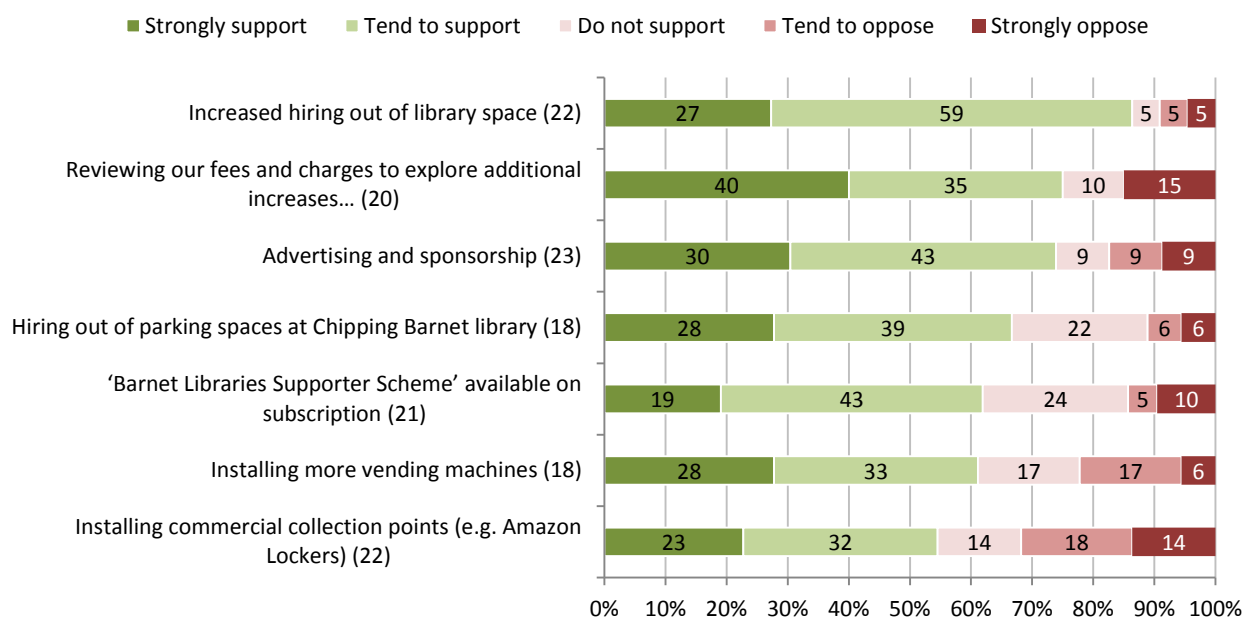


Figure 67: Levels of support and opposition for the income generation proposals (original scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Further comments about income generation

- 7.41 Comments that libraries should not be required to generate income, as this would be at odds with their public character and general purpose.

We should avoid transforming libraries into commercial places. They are the few remaining places where profit is not the driving force.

I feel overt commercial involvement may impact on our being seen as impartial when providing information.

There might not be any way of generating more income from the library service: it's not that kind of organisation

- 7.42 One area where there was some difference of opinion was in relation to charging fines on children's books. A number of respondents were opposed on the grounds that this would discourage borrowing and adversely affect the less well-off; however, a few were supportive.

I don't believe that charging fines on children's books would be cost effective and it would affect some of the most vulnerable children and families more than anyone else.

Children's' books would bring in much needed revenue and make children more aware of how important libraries are and that they need to be preserved at all costs. It will also give them a sense of responsibility which is character -building.

- 7.43 There was concern that vending machines would malfunction, not generate enough income, or could promote unhealthy lifestyles by selling sugary foods and drinks. Comments made in relation to the 'Barnet Libraries Supporters Scheme' tended to suggest that would only benefit the better off.

- 7.44 There was some support for advertising and sponsorship, although many respondents caveated their support by saying that not all sponsors or advertisers would necessarily be appropriate (e.g. a feeling that ‘unhealthy’ brands should not be allowed to sponsor children’s activities). There was also concern about Amazon’s reputation, and about commercial sponsorship compromising libraries’ independence:

The sponsor must not be in any way capable of seriously harming the service via the withdrawal of funds if they decide to use said as leverage to obtain what they want or to object to the service's actions/stock/values.

Advertising and sponsorship is fine from an ethical provider who is a silent partner

Amazon, with their poor image for social responsibility, would be a terrible name to associate [with] Barnet Council.

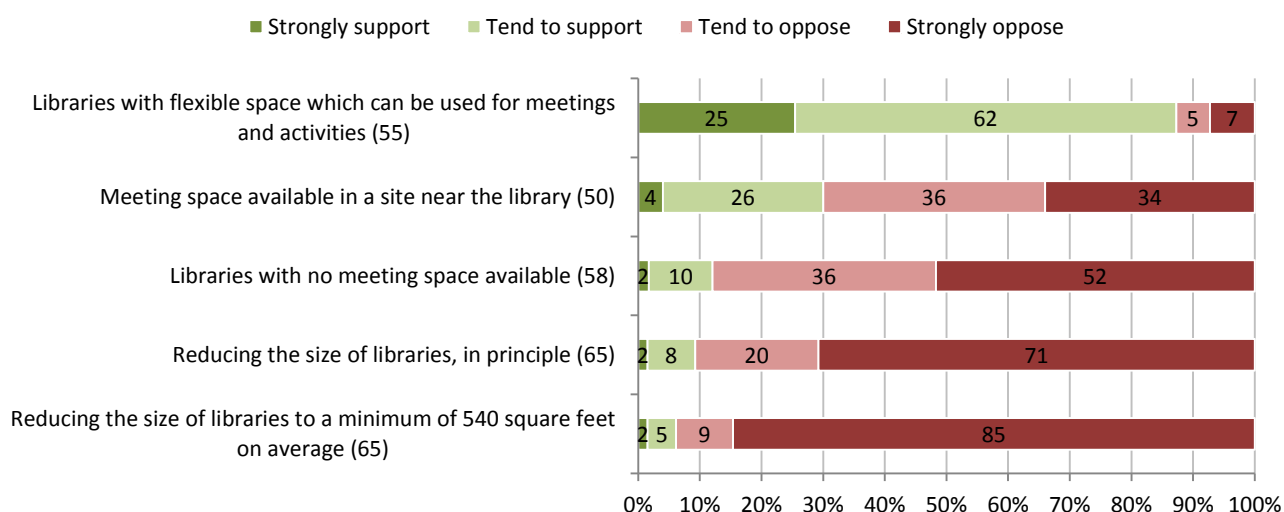
- 7.45 There was some suggestion that the proposals outlined elsewhere (e.g. unstaffed opening and space reductions) would be incompatible with these suggestions for generating income.

How are you going to implement these ideas without having staffed buildings to deal with the issues the above ideas will create e.g. paperwork, upkeep and preparation for hiring spaces?

Reducing library space

- 7.46 While there was widespread support for libraries with flexible meeting space which can be used for meetings and activities, most respondents opposed reducing the size of libraries to a minimum of 540 square feet on average; reducing the size of libraries, in principle; and libraries with no meeting space available.

Figure 68: Levels of support and opposition for proposals around reducing library space (revised scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Further comments about reducing library space

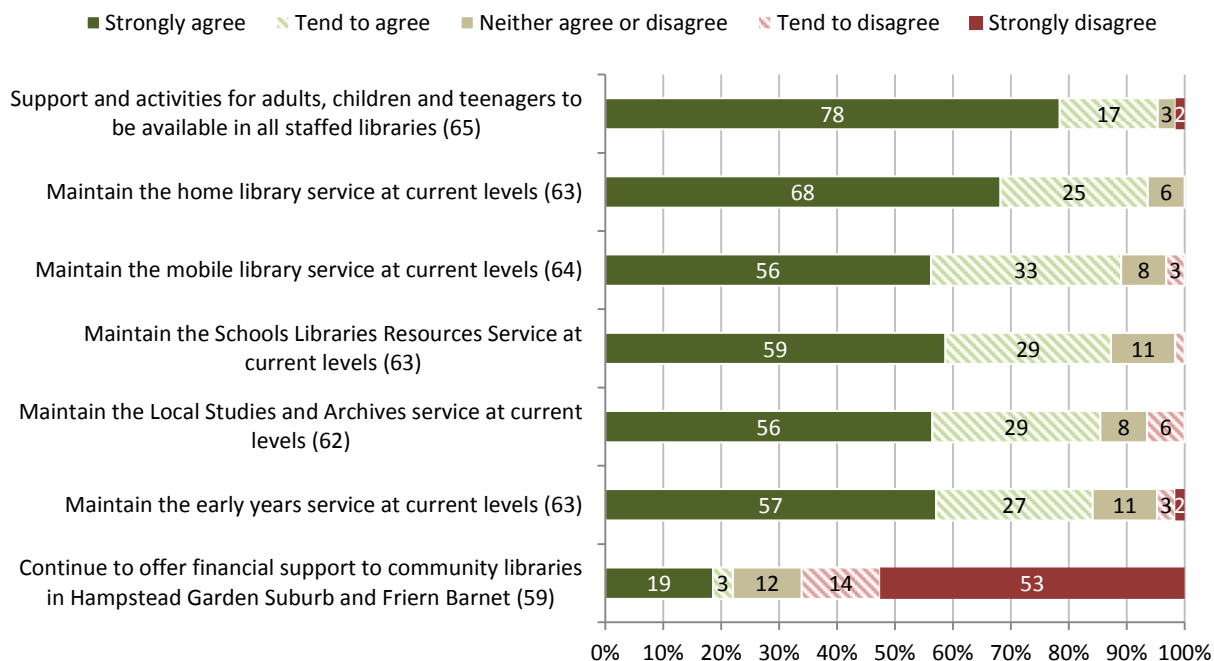
- 7.47 Many staff expressed reservations about reducing library space and the potential challenges this would pose for the service in general. A couple referenced the four objectives outlined at the beginning of the questionnaire, to suggest that these were incompatible with reducing the size of libraries.

- 7.48 One respondent suggested it would be better to introduce limited library closures, if this meant the rest of the service could be maintained. Another suggested reducing the size of multiple libraries would represent a backward step.
- 7.49 Concerns were highlighted around the proposed size of 540 square feet, namely that this would be '*tantamount to no library*' and would lead to an overall reduction in the quality of stock and service. One respondent asked where this figure had been decided upon.
- 7.50 It was felt there would be limitations on the number and type of activities that could be run – particularly children's activities e.g. 'Rhyme Time', school activities etc. – and the numbers who can be accommodated at these events. Some respondents felt there would be a reduction in the breadth and quality of stock available; others suggested there would need to be a reduction in IT and study facilities in response to any reduction in floor space.
- 7.51 There was concern that reducing the space would reduce the number of users e.g. having to turn people away, who would then be put off and not return in future. One respondent suggested that the reduction in size at Hampstead Garden Suburb library had led to it becoming underused.
- 7.52 Concerns were also raised in relation to access e.g. accommodating wheelchair users, pushchairs etc. Others highlighted health and safety concerns, particularly in relation to the elderly, the disabled and very young children.

Specific library services

- 7.53 Majorities of respondents agreed with maintaining the following at current levels: home library service, mobile library service, Schools Libraries Resources Service, Local Studies and Archives Service, and the early years service. More than 9 out of 10 agreed that support and activities for children, adults and teenagers should be available in all staffed libraries.
- 7.54 However, there was limited support for continuing to offer financial support to the community libraries in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Friern Barnet.

Figure 69: Levels of agreement and disagreement with the objectives for specific library services (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Further comments about specific library services

- 7.55 There were comments about the need to protect services (either specific services or the full range of provision more generally):

The home library service and local studies are very small teams which deliver big results so should be protected.

The home library service serves venerable members of the community who would not otherwise have access to our services; it needs to be protected.

Maintaining our desperately short services at current levels is hugely important because we don't have much more to get rid of; if anything, we need to expand.

- 7.56 While one respondent advocated the two community libraries being taken back under full council control, in general there was greater support for their financial support being withdrawn:

While community libraries are worthwhile it is time they took on the full financial burden themselves.

HGS and Fri wanted to go it alone - we shouldn't be having to pay for them.

Community libraries in the borough are not offering what we would recognise as a valued service. Friern Barnet in particular is a successful community centre with a poor second hand book section.

- 7.57 Other respondents had suggestions about how money might be saved. Some respondents described particular services (School Libraries Resources Service, early years) as being self-funding. The early years' service attracted most comments: a few respondents understood that this already was – or if it

was not felt that it probably should be – funded from other departments and not from the libraries budget.

I think there are sites on the mobile route that are less well used. There could be potential savings here.

The SLRS is self-funding so shouldn't be affected by cuts. The early years budget is reliant on funding from other council departments so surely can't be protected? I think it should be though!

My understanding is that the SLRS is self-funding and for the most part the early years' service is self-funding - why would you close these services if they are costing little money?

I do not feel that early years' service & community libraries should be funded from the library budget. They are entities exclusive from the council run library service and should be funded from more appropriate budgets.

If something had to be sacrificed then it should be the early years' service as this tends to duplicate a service already provided by Barnet council i.e. the children's centres. Even though it can be argued that it is self-funding or grant maintained, it still tends to incur costs and staff time.

Alternative delivery models

- 7.58 The only delivery model which received widespread support was libraries being run directly by the council.
- 7.59 Of the remaining alternatives, there was most support for libraries being run by a staff owned mutual, through a shared service with another council, and by an educational body.

Figure 70: Levels of support and opposition for the proposed delivery models (revised scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)

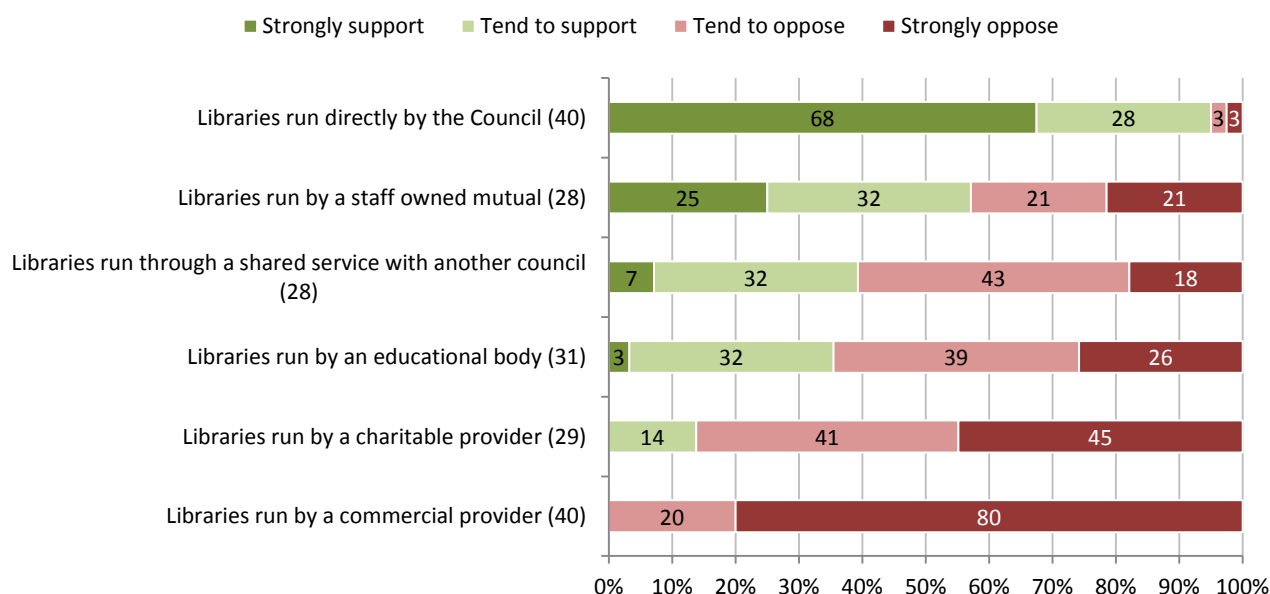
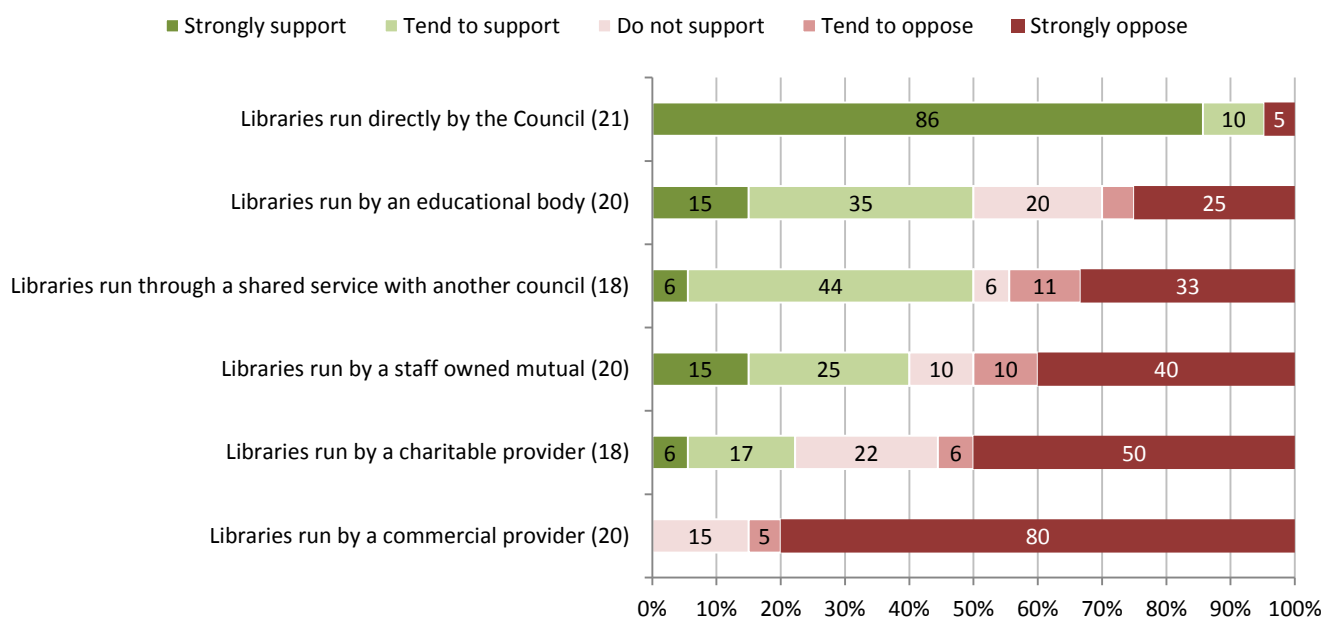


Figure 71: Levels of support and opposition for the income generation proposals (original scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



Further comments about the delivery models

- 7.60 There was some feeling that anything other than a council-run service would be contrary to the libraries' *raison d'être* and public character. There was widespread feeling that libraries were incompatible with being run like businesses as they were unlikely to be profitable (and might therefore be at risk of cuts).
- 7.61 It was also suggested that a commercial provider would erode the quality of the service provided by seeking to reduce costs or downsize the library. Outsourcing was also seen as ideologically motivated, and there was some criticism of the track records of LBB services which have already been outsourced.
- 7.62 There was some suggestion that a staff mutual might be a viable option, but a number of staff felt they had insufficient information to discuss this from a fully informed perspective. Other respondents were interested to find out more about the service being run by an educational body, or as part of a shared service with another council. However, one respondent was uneasy about the service being too fully absorbed by an educational body.
- 7.63 While there was a little support in principle for libraries being run by a charitable provider, there were also concerns that charitable organisations would lack the capacity and resources to run the service.

The information provided about delivery models

- 7.64 When asked whether they had received enough information about delivery models, 61% of respondents said they had not.
- 7.65 When invited to comment further, some said they had had no information; others felt they specifically needed more information about the pros and cons of each possible delivery model, and how they might work in practice and/or examples of whether the models had been implemented elsewhere. There was also felt to be a lack of information about the potential impacts on staffing e.g. terms and conditions of contract, or possible redundancies.

7.66 Some felt the staff owned mutual sounded like it might potentially be a good model if it was sustainable and could be made to work financially. However, others questioned whether it would work, and a number felt they were unable to comment due to a lack of information.

Options and potential alternatives

7.67 The results show a consistent pattern of strong opposition to the three options, but particularly Option 3.

7.68 There was slightly more support for Option 2 than Option 1; however, more respondents were strongly opposed to Option 2 than to Option 1.

Figure 72: Levels of support and opposition for the three options (revised scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)

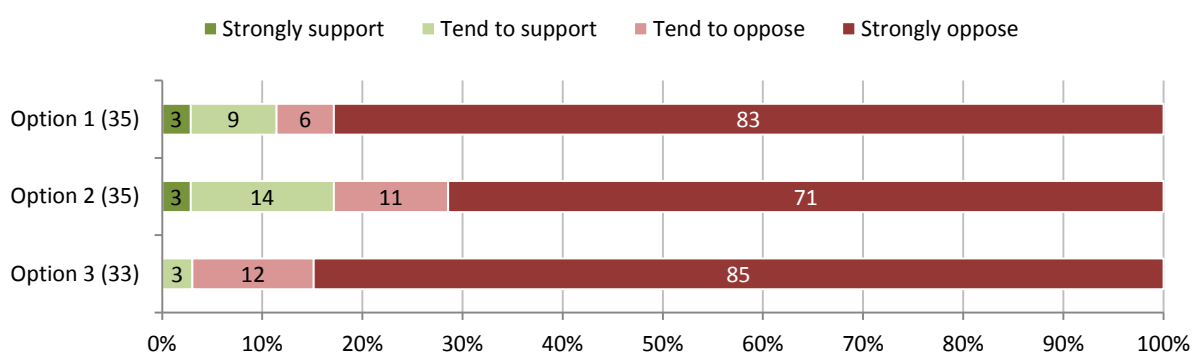
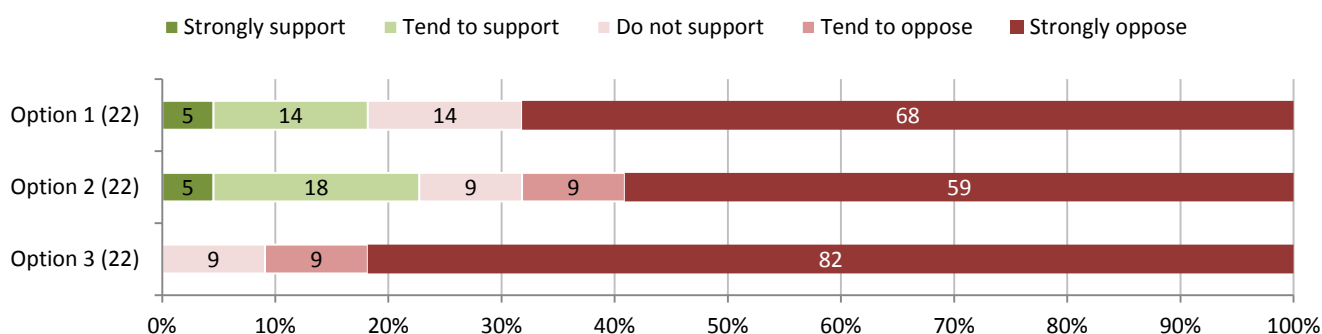


Figure 73: Levels of support and opposition for the three options (revised scale) (Base: All respondents; number of respondents shown in brackets)



7.69 Only a small minority of staff chose to provide a response to the question inviting them to rank the options. Of those who did respond, an alternative option was most widely selected as the first preference (i.e. most appropriate) (14 respondents). Options 1 and 2 were the first preferences of four and five respondents respectively. Nobody selected Option 3 as their first preference.

Further comments about the options and possible alternatives

7.70 A number of comments expressed a view that none of the options were appropriate, and/or that the status quo should be maintained:

I don't believe that any of the above options are viable and provide a good service to the public.

There is only one option and that is to keep the existing service and make the cut elsewhere

Each option is meant to put the public off using the service, to give the council a reason to get rid of libraries altogether.

- 7.71 A number of suggested alternatives were provided, including funding the libraries from another source, making savings elsewhere, and/or maximising income e.g. raising council tax. It was felt that the Council should also do more to take into account the service which libraries provide to other agencies:

There is provision in legislation to hold a referendum to ascertain if residents are willing to pay more council tax to maintain the service. Why not ask them?

The council reserves could be used to find some money for libraries and other services. Barnet should stop employing consultants and paying them huge salaries. A few council staff in high positions are overpaid compared to the rest of us.

Commissioners charging market rates to commercial organisations that use library facilities.

Ensuring that the services the libraries provide to other agencies (council and partners) is fully costed and considered when taking into account budgets.

- 7.72 There was some support for closing libraries, but this tended to be on the proviso that it was a small number and the rest of the service could be maintained:

Close East Barnet and Childs Hill libraries - sell them and raise money to re-provide good sized library in each of the remaining locations.

A workable option would close two or maybe three of the less productive sites, do some relocations and refit the remaining sites, then spin the service out into a mutual.

I would rather close several libraries than have smaller sites or community libraries but option 2 seems very extreme.

Closure of 2, maybe three underused libraries - do not hand them over to volunteers, just close them. Seek funding opportunities...

- 7.73 There were suggestions about changes to opening times and days:

Keep all libraries open but on different days so that perhaps there are 4 open in the south of the borough on 2 or 3 days a week but others open in other parts of the borough on different days.

[An alternative might be] if all the libraries are open excluding Sundays. The other option could be if libraries open till 8pm only one day a week and Sundays are excluded.

Another option should be that staff run libraries with council funding to existing levels with opening hours cut to 10-6 7 days a week and charges up by 10%.

- 7.74 There was some support for alternative delivery models, and refurbishment/relocation under specific circumstances:

I think we would be able to maintain the standards of our service with a mutual arrangement.

The question is money, either a staff mutual or an educational body/sponsor.

If the existing buildings are not cost effective then find alternate but reasonable sized accommodation. Reasonable sized = min 2000 sq. ft.

8. User groups questionnaire

- 8.1 The user groups questionnaire received 20 responses between 9th December 2014 and the end of the consultation period, including responses from representatives of the following: 6 from charities, 4 from community groups, 3 from public sector organisations, and 4 'others'. Three respondents did not specify whom they were representing.
- 8.2 The most common activities, meetings and services provided by these organisations are education, information and advice, and social/community groups (all 6 respondents).

How you use the library service

- 8.3 These groups were active across a range of libraries, and all respondents indicated that their groups would be likely to use libraries for their activities in the future.
- 8.4 Three quarters of the respondents reported that their group uses libraries at least once a week. In general, the groups who responded were more likely to use libraries on weekdays although there was a fairly wide spread of usage across days and times.
- 8.5 The majority of respondents (15) reported that fewer than 20 people would attend would attend a typical activity or meeting hosted by their organisation, although 3 respondents reported that between 20 and 29 people would attend.
- 8.6 More than two thirds reported that their groups' activities and meeting involve no library staff or volunteers.
- 8.7 Six respondents reported that their group runs meetings or activities elsewhere in the area, as well as in Barnet libraries. Examples of other venues used included church halls and community centres.
- 8.8 Respondents were asked whether their organisation was aware of other venues in the local area that they could use for their activities. None answered in the affirmative.
- 8.9 Further details about the possibility of using other venues were provided as follows:

I suppose we would have to find someone (a group member maybe?) with a house/ lounge big enough to seat up to 20 people.

Nowhere else is available on a Wednesday morning locally with the same excellent facilities and at the same cost.

Other locations have said they don't have the space and availability.

We struggle to find a venue that is neutral, user friendly, and cost effective.

- 8.10 Comments about the things that groups value about the service covered the following main themes:

Practical locations of libraries and easy accessibility e.g. easy to reach by bus, and availability of car parking;

Quality of facilities, and the availability of facilities that may be difficult to access elsewhere (e.g. PCs and wi-fi, meeting rooms);

Quiet atmosphere, conducive to learning and study;

Staff e.g. to provide customer service and act as a ‘back up’;

Neutrality of venue, ‘*non stigmatizing*’ and encouraging confidentiality;

Suitability for all age groups, or specific benefits for particular age groups;

Specific benefits for users e.g. social and health benefits, reducing isolation, promoting literacy and skills etc;

The flexibility of the space e.g. being able to combine attendance at the group with general use of the library facilities.

How satisfied are you with the library service?

8.11 Most respondents were satisfied with the various aspects of the library service listed in Figure 74 below. In particular all fifteen respondents who answered the question about ‘staff skills and knowledge’ were satisfied.

Figure 74: Satisfaction with aspects of the library service (user groups).

Please indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied your group or organisation is with each of the following aspects of the library service.	Number of respondents		
	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied
Availability of free computers and IT services	10	1	0
Availability of online information resources	10	1	0
Learning events for children and families	9	1	0
Staff skills and knowledge	15	0	0
Learning and community events	12	2	0
Opening hours	13	2	1
Access to other council services	7	3	0
Access to other public services	7	3	0

8.12 Respondents were overwhelmingly satisfied with the various aspects of the library buildings and access. In particular all individuals who responded were satisfied with the location, accessibility, comfort and standard of the buildings, and with community spaces and meeting rooms (all 17 out of 17).

8.13 When asked what their group or organisation values most about the library service, the most common responses were: “Libraries provide meeting rooms and community spaces” (12 respondents) and “Libraries act as community 'hubs'” (8 respondents).

The future library service

Outcomes and objectives

- 8.14 There was universal agreement with the 4 objectives. In particular, 15 out of 15 respondents agreed strongly with the objective: "A library service that makes knowledge and information easily accessible".
- 8.15 The following further comments were also made:

Classes are helping the community and are very important.

Engaging with communities is especially important when people who live alone and find it difficult to engage could do so in the totally 'equal' and non-threatening space of a library e.g. the reading groups that take place aren't specifically for 'lonely' people.

What could change?

- 8.16 Using volunteers to enhance the services provided was the only proposal which the majority of respondents supported (12 in support; 3 opposed).
- 8.17 A slight majority was opposed to community run libraries. The other proposals were strongly opposed, with particularly strong opposition seen in response to closing six libraries (0 in support; 15 opposed), closing two libraries (2 in support; 14 opposed), reducing the size of libraries (1 in support; 15 opposed) and reducing staffed opening hours (2 in support; 12 opposed).

Figure 75: Responses to proposed approaches to help save money (user groups).

To what extent do you support or oppose the following approaches to help save money?	Number of respondents	
Using volunteers to enhance the services provided by paid staff - for example, to provide volunteer-led community activities	12 Support	3 Oppose
Community run libraries	6 Support	8 Oppose
Closing two libraries	2 Support	14 Oppose
Closing six libraries	0 Support	15 Oppose
Reducing the size of libraries (this could be up to a minimum of 540 square feet, on average)	1 Support	14 Oppose
Reducing staffed opening hours (by up to 50%)	2 Support	12 Oppose
Unstaffed opening, using technology to extend opening hours	4 Support	11 Oppose
Unstaffed opening, using technology as a replacement for staffed opening hours	3 Support	10 Oppose
Reducing the amount of money spent on stock	3 Support	10 Oppose

- 8.18 The following further comments were made in relation to proposals to save money:

I do not [agree] that moving the adult section to a hub and the children section to the children's centre as we feel that the library is a hub in itself. Also although it is good to provide and increase voluntary opportunities, I do feel that having paid staff run the libraries is key to their success.

I think that although the use of technology would be good in keeping libraries open. It would need to be very clear for people - who would be fearful in the environment without staff - when staff are going to be available and on the premises.

Librarians are wonderful professionals. Libraries need to have librarians, not just access [to] technology - which many elderly users cannot cope with anyway.

There are too many members of staff.

Library opening times

- 8.19 Three respondents identified Monday as the most appropriate day for libraries to be staffed, and the same number identified Saturday. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday were each selected by one respondent. No respondents ranked Sunday any higher than fourth, and four respondents ranked it seventh (i.e. last).
- 8.20 The times when respondents would most like libraries to be staffed were fairly widely spread, though in general there was more support for the hours between 10 am and 8pm, with little support for after 8pm.
- 8.21 However, it is worth noting that most respondents failed to answer the questions, and that respondents did not have the opportunity to rank interlocked days and times.
- 8.22 In the main, respondents reported that they would not be confident in using an unstaffed library. Of 13 respondents, 4 would not feel very confident and 6 would not feel confident at all. 2 would feel very confident, with 1 a little confident.
- 8.23 Six respondents stated that “volunteers on site” and “help learning how to access community space during unstaffed” would increase the likelihood of them using an unstaffed library. Other comments stressed the need for at least one member of staff to be present or for staff to have rotating rotas to cover more hours.
- 8.24 Respondents were also invited to make further comments about how the approaches to staffing and opening times might affect their groups’ activities or meetings, and the main points raised were as follows:

A few groups would not feel confident at all in an unstaffed library, or would be unable to operate in this setting

Specifically, one group’s staff would not be allowed to use unstaffed libraries for activities, as this would be classed as ‘lone working’ and would go against their organisation’s policies

While one respondent would personally not mind using an unstaffed library, they felt that members of their group – some of whom are vulnerable – would probably not feel comfortable

One respondent suggested they might get used to unstaffed libraries with suitable training; however, librarians would still need to be part of the service as a whole

Another suggested that the library is a fundamental community space, particularly at a time when other organisations are being 'squeezed' and encouraged to make use of such spaces

Some concern was expressed about the possibility of staff job cuts.

Reducing the size of libraries

- 8.25 Respondents were asked about the amount of space their group typically uses, and about the minimum amount of space they would need for their activities. 7 respondents reported that their group uses meeting rooms with capacity for 16-30 people, with a further 6 respondents stating they use meeting rooms with capacity for 6-15 people, and 2 reporting that they use the public library space.
- 8.26 Eight respondents stated that, as a minimum, their group would need a meeting room with capacity for 6-15 people, with a further 5 stating they would need a room with capacity for 16-30. Only 1 respondent felt their group could use a meeting room with capacity for up to 5 people, and 1 felt their group could use public library space.
- 8.27 The questionnaire also asked respondents how much they supported or opposed a number of approaches for reducing the size of libraries.
- 8.28 There was substantial support for libraries with flexible space which can be used for meetings and activities (12 in support; 2 opposed).
- 8.29 However, significant majorities were opposed to the other approaches. In particular, 16 respondents were opposed to libraries with no meeting space available, with none in support. Only 1 respondent was supportive of the approach to reducing the size of libraries to a minimum of 540 square feet, with 13 respondents opposed.
- 8.30 Respondents were also invited to make further comments about any other changes that could be made that would minimise the impact of libraries being made smaller. One respondent mentioned multi-functional spaces, although another felt that nothing could be done to minimise the impact of smaller libraries.
- 8.31 One respondent suggested that a library plays an essential role in helping isolated service users back into the community by allowing them to access mainstream services at the same time as attending the group. Therefore any attempts to move meeting space outside the library would defeat the aims of the group.

Relocation and redevelopment of library sites

- 8.32 When asked how the relocation of the library they use would affect their group's usage, 7 respondents thought they would use it the same amount, 3 thought they may use it less, and 1 thought they would use it more. 5 respondents said they didn't know/were not sure.
- 8.33 A small number of respondents provided further comments. There were queries about how relocation would save money in the short term, and concern about possible disruption to services. One respondent stated they would be happy provided they could still use the space on a regular basis.

Alternative delivery models

- 8.34 Respondents were asked how various alternative delivery models would affect their groups’ usage of the libraries.
- 8.35 In general, most respondents suggested that they would use the library the same amount. However, it is worth noting that 6 respondents (of 14 who answered) felt they would definitely use libraries less if they were run by a commercial provider.

Options

- 8.36 A majority of respondents were opposed to each option, and no option stood out as being particularly well or poorly supported in relation to the others.

Figure 76: Responses to the proposed options (user groups).

To what extent do you support or oppose these options?	Number of respondents	
Option 1	5 Support	8 Oppose
Option 2	6 Support	8 Oppose
Option 3	5 Support	7 Oppose

- 8.37 Respondents were also invited to rank the options in order of how appropriate they felt them to be. Option 2 received the most first preferences (6 respondents) with Option 1 and Option 3 tied (2 respondents each).
- 8.38 The questionnaire also provided an opportunity for respondents to comment about possible alternatives. There were relatively few comments, but the following points were made:

A little more money could be charged for the use of the library rooms

No changes are needed

Community libraries can work, but require a lot of time and dedication. They may be less likely to work in communities which are larger and less cohesive.

Volunteering

- 8.39 Respondents were asked whether their group or organisation would be interested in volunteering to help with library activities or being involved in running a community library. There was some interest in groups getting involved, although the response was fairly evenly split.

Figure 77: Responses about volunteering and being involved in running a community library (user groups).

Would your group or organisation be interested in...?	Number of respondents	
...volunteering to help with more activities in Barnet libraries?	8 Yes	6 No
...being involved in running a community library?	6 Yes	7 No

9. Children’s questionnaire

- 9.1 A separate questionnaire was developed for children of primary school age. It was made available at the drop-in sessions in early March 2015, and was also promoted through schools. It yielded 51 responses, the majority of which (39 responses) were from children aged 7 to 10 years.
- 9.2 The vast majority (48 respondents) were library users. More than half of these users (27 respondents) reported that they use East Finchley library most often.
- 9.3 Respondents who use libraries are most likely to use them to read or borrow books (47 respondents) or to look for information or to find something out (14 respondents). Only 8 respondents reported that they use the library without an adult.
- 9.4 Many of the respondents said that there was nothing they did not like about the libraries (although a small number mentioned specific problems e.g. relating to noise). When asked what they liked most about the library, respondents were most likely to mention the library books.
- 9.5 Most respondents (32) said they were happy about the proposals for longer opening hours and accessing the library when staff are not present.
- 9.6 However, the majority of the respondents reported that they are unhappy with the other proposed changes. 47 would be unhappy about libraries closing, and 36 would be unhappy about libraries being made smaller.
- 9.7 Respondents were a little more supportive of libraries moving to new buildings, although far more were unhappy (21 respondents) than were happy with this proposal (8 respondents).
- 9.8 Respondents were also asked whether there was anything else they wanted to say about the proposed changes. The comments tended to focus on the importance of keeping libraries open and accessible; for example:

...if there is any other building built in place of any library then I would be rather upset with there being no library. Also that if any library moves it may be too far away for other people and they wouldn't be able to go to the library anymore;

Please keep the libraries open and keep them the way they are.

- 9.9 When asked whether they were happy or unhappy with each proposed option, respondents were most unhappy with Option 2 (see Figure 78 below).

Figure 78: Responses to the proposed options (user groups).

To what extent do you support or oppose these options?	Number of respondents	
Option 1	20 Happy	13 Unhappy
Option 2	9 Happy	23 Unhappy

Option 3

17
Happy11
Unhappy

- 9.10 When asked their favourite option, similar numbers favoured Option 1 (15 respondents) and Option 3 (14 respondents), while there was also some support for Option 2 (10 respondents).
- 9.11 When respondents were asked about their least favourite option, 24 of them selected Option 2 (compared with only 7 and 9 respondents choosing Options 1 and 3 respectively).
- 9.12 It is worth noting, however, that the children’s questionnaire did not provide any outline information about the specific libraries would be affected by each of the proposed options.
- 9.13 The further comments made in relation to the options tended to express a view that all libraries should stay open. One respondent expressed support for Option 1; another felt all of the options were unsuitable.

I think we shouldn't close down any libraries because people will stop learning;

I have no favourites. All terrible;

Option 1 would be the best option.

- 9.14 Some respondents also suggested other changes that could be made to libraries. Their suggestions included: longer opening hours, larger libraries, more libraries, more self-service machines, and better equipped libraries/libraries with more books.

10. Young people’s questionnaire

- 10.1 The young people’s questionnaire received 47 responses.
- 10.2 29 respondents reported that they currently use the library; a further 6 had used them in the past and 9 had never used them.

What we want the library service to look like in the future

- 10.3 Each objective was agreed with by the majority of respondents. In particular, 44 agreed with a library service that makes knowledge and information easily accessible (none disagreed), and 42 agreed with a library service that provides children and adults with reading, literacy and learning opportunities (1 disagreed).

Figure 79: Responses to library objectives (young people)

How much do you agree or disagree with these objectives?	Number of respondents		
	Agree	Neither	Disagree
A library service that provides children and adults with reading, literacy and learning opportunities	42	1	1
A library service that engages with communities	37	5	2
A library service that makes knowledge and information easily accessible.	44	0	0
A library service that keeps providing the same services for vulnerable people with a lower budget.	38	4	2

- 10.4 Very few further comments were made. One respondent praised the objectives; another felt that libraries are essential for a sense of community, and that closing them would be detrimental.
- 10.5 Another respondent proposed an objective to exclude privatisation and outsourcing from the service.

What could change?

- 10.6 Most respondents agreed with making opening hours longer, using new technology to have libraries open without staff there, libraries doing different things to make money, and having more library volunteers to provide extra activities.
- 10.7 However, substantial majorities disagreed with making libraries smaller and closing some libraries. A smaller majority disagreed with moving libraries to new sites or redeveloping them.
- 10.8 Respondents were fairly evenly split on the question of reducing staffed opening hours: 16 agreed and 15 disagreed.

Figure 80: Responses to proposed changes (young people)

How much do you agree or disagree with the biggest changes planned for libraries?	Number of respondents		
	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Making opening hours longer	36	3	2
Reducing staffed opening hours	16	10	15
Using new technology to have libraries open without staff there	28	3	12
Moving libraries to a new site or redeveloping them	13	8	18
Making libraries smaller	2	4	34
Closing some libraries	3	2	36
Libraries doing different things to make more money e.g. hiring out meeting rooms, providing collection points like Amazon lockers, reviewing fees and charges	26	8	6
Having more library volunteers who will provide extra activities in libraries	28	12	2

- ^{10.9} When invited to comment further, one respondent felt that making libraries smaller would hinder opportunities to study, and that people may be less inclined to use the service if their nearest library had closed. Another felt that proposals to close libraries did not take account of the effect on young people who would have nowhere else to go.
- ^{10.10} One respondent felt libraries should be open later on Tuesdays and Thursdays to cater for school and college students who may want to visit after 5pm.
- ^{10.11} Another respondent requested that libraries stay open, while another felt LBB’s proposals should be ‘condemned as criminal’.

Library opening times

- ^{10.12} Respondents were asked when they would be most likely to want to use a library without being accompanied by an adult. Respondents could select a maximum of five options out of the fourteen available (7 time periods on weekdays, and the same time periods on weekends).
- ^{10.13} The results – which are summarised in Figure 81 below – suggest that respondents are most likely to want to use the libraries unaccompanied by an adult after 4pm on weekdays, and during the afternoon on a weekend.

Figure 81: Times when respondents are most likely to want to use a library (young people)

Day and time	Number of respondents
WEEKDAYS	n
Earlier than 10am	9
10am-12pm	2

12pm-2pm	4
2pm-4pm	5
4pm-6pm	19
6pm-8pm	17
After 8pm	12
WEEKENDS	n
Earlier than 10am	6
10am-12pm	9
12pm-2pm	14
2pm-4pm	17
4pm-6pm	12
6pm-8pm	4
After 8pm	7

^{10.14} Two respondents provided further comments about the plans for opening the library without staff. One said they would always want a library to be staffed with qualified librarians; the other said they would feel unhappy about being in the library without at least one member of staff.

What will stay the same?

^{10.15} Most respondents agreed with the various parts of the library service being maintained at the current level.

Figure 82: Responses to whether specific parts of the library service should be kept at the same level (young people)

How much do you agree or disagree that these parts of the library service should be kept at the same level as they are now?	Number of respondents		
	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Mobile library	21	5	3
Home library	22	7	2
Support and activities for adults, children and teenagers in libraries when staff are there	27	7	1
School Libraries Resource Service which provides support for school libraries	29	4	1
Local Studies and Archives Service which provides information about local history	25	9	2
Support for community libraries in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Friern Barnet	20	10	2

^{10.16} Most respondents agreed that self-service online technology should be improved, and that e-books, e-audio and other online resources should be maintained or increased.

Figure 83: Responses to whether specific parts of the library service should be improved (young people)

How much do you agree or disagree that these parts of the library service should be improved?	Number of respondents		
	Agree	Neither	Disagree
Improve self-service online technology	35	2	2
Maintain or increase the e-books, e-audio and other online resources and learning materials which are available to library users	31	4	3

^{10.17} One respondent commented that s/he already finds the self-service technology to be more than satisfactory, although adding that this did not necessarily mean that it could not be improved.

^{10.18} Another respondent felt that self-service technology should not be developed if it is too expensive, citing Haringey’s library service as an example of how libraries can work well without this technology in place.

Options

^{10.19} More respondents supported than opposed the options, though there was a little more support for Option 2 than for either Option 1 or Option 3.

Figure 84: Responses to proposed approaches to help save money (young people).

To what extent do you support or oppose the following approaches to help save money?	Number of respondents	
	Support	Oppose
Option 1	21	15
Option 2	24	12
Option 3	18	12

^{10.20} When respondents ranked the options (in order of how appropriate they felt them to be), more respondents selected Option 1 as a first choice (i.e. ‘most appropriate’) than either of the other two options. However, it also picked up more fourth preferences (i.e. ‘least appropriate’) than either Option 2 or Option 3 (see Figure 85).

Figure 85: Respondents’ rankings for which of the options would be most appropriate

		Option			
		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Another option
OVERALL		n	n	n	n
Rank	1 – most appropriate	13	9	6	4
	2	4	11	12	1
	3	7	2	11	1
	4 – least appropriate	7	5	3	2

^{10.21} The following further views were expressed:

- None of the options are suitable; the library service should also be kept in-house;
- Libraries should be kept open and at the same size, with increased technology. The service could introduce a small annual membership fee and services like Amazon drop boxes;
- LBB fails to carry out proper consultation, and the questions and options are biased.

Volunteering

^{10.22} Twelve respondents said they would be interested in volunteering to help with activities in Barnet libraries; twenty-six said they would not be interested.

11. Introduction to Qualitative Consultation elements

Introduction

- ^{11.1} The remainder of this report details the findings of the qualitative consultation elements, which attracted a total of 852 participants/responses (though it should be noted that some individuals may have contributed to more than one consultation strand).
- ^{11.2} The qualitative programme comprised:

ORS-led Deliberative Research

12 x two-hour focus groups with residents (115 participants in total – numbers in each group in brackets below)

These sessions comprised: non-users [two groups, 18]; Muslim residents [15]; young people [13]; residents with mental health issues [12]; older people [11]; residents with physical disabilities [10]; members of BME communities [nine]; unemployed residents and those on low income [eight]; Gypsies and Travellers [seven]; parents of children aged 0-15 [seven]; and residents with learning disabilities [five – including two telephone interviews].

Three x two-hour deliberative forums with residents (43 participants in total)

These were open-invitation events for the general public, whose purpose was to explain in more detail the content of the consultation document and provide additional information if required. This, it was intended, would facilitate more informed discussions between the Council and the public about the libraries options proposals. The first deliberative event attracted 11 members of the public, and the other two attracted 16 each.

Two x two-hour focus groups with staff (18 participants in total)

LBB library staff were invited to attend focus groups to discuss their views on LBB’s proposals. It was originally intended that ORS facilitate five such groups, however the level of interest was such that only two took place. Nine staff members attended the first, and 10 attended the second.

Depth telephone interviews with users of LBB’s home library service (10 participants in total)

LBB-led Deliberative Research - 14 meetings and drop-in sessions with particular interest groups (circa 150 participants in total)

14 library drop-in sessions and three days on the mobile library route (339 participants in total) which were arranged to allow local residents to have their say on LBB’s future options for the libraries service. They were held at varying times of day (including on weekends) to maximise participation opportunities: 339 people attended.

Written Submissions

182 written submissions (including 114 received from local schoolchildren - seemingly as part of an organised school-based activity)

12. Focus Groups with Members of the Public

Introduction

The Commission

- ^{12.1} In order to provide thoughtful consideration of the issues by a wide range of ‘ordinary’ members of the public, ORS recruited and facilitated 12 focus groups during February 2015. The point or purpose of these deliberative sessions was to allow LBB to engage with, and listen to, members of the public about some important issues - so that the participants would become more informed about the financial context and to provide their views on the libraries consultation, the principles which form the basis of the options and the three proposed options.
- ^{12.2} In this context, ORS’ role was to design, facilitate and report the findings. We worked in collaboration with LBB to prepare informative stimulus material for the meetings before facilitating the discussions and preparing this independent report of findings.
- ^{12.3} Although, like other forms of qualitative consultation, deliberative focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative, these 12 meetings gave a wide range of people the opportunity to discuss the financial context and options in detail. We believe the meetings are broadly indicative of how informed members of the public would formulate and express their views in similar contexts.
- ^{12.4} Therefore, we believe that the 12 meetings are particularly important within the context of the whole consultation programme – because the focus groups were inclusive (encompassing a wide range of people), not self-selecting (randomly recruited), relatively well-informed (following initial presentations of the key issues and potential options), and fairly conducted (through careful facilitation by ORS). There was a considerable contrast between the tone of these thoughtful and considered meetings, on the one hand, and the confrontational atmosphere that ORS encountered in *some* of the drop-in groups, on the other.

Attendance and Representativeness

- ^{12.5} In total, there were **115** diverse participants at the focus groups. The dates of the meetings and attendance levels by members of the public were as follows:

Figure 86: Public Focus Groups

GROUP	TIME AND DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Non-users	6:30pm – 8:30pm Monday 2 nd February 2015	9
Non-users	6:30pm – 8:30pm Tuesday 3 rd February 2015	9

Gypsies and Travellers	1:00pm – 3:00pm Wednesday 4th February 2015	7
Parents of children aged 0-15	6:30pm – 8:30pm Wednesday 4th February 2015	7
Older People	1:00pm – 3:00pm Thursday 5th February 2015	11
BME residents	6:30pm – 8:30pm Thursday 5th February 2015	9 (including one telephone interview)
Residents with learning disabilities	10:00am – 12:00pm Monday 9th February 2015	5 (including two telephone interviews)
Muslim Residents	6:30pm – 8:30pm Monday 9th February 2015	15
Residents with physical disabilities	10:00am – 12:00pm Tuesday 10th February 2015	10
Young People	5:00pm – 7:00pm Tuesday 10th February 2015	13
Residents with Mental Health Issues	1:00pm -3:00pm Thursday 12th February 2015	12
Unemployed residents and those on low income	6:30pm-8:30pm Thursday 12th February 2015	8

- 12.6 The attendance target for the focus groups was around eight to 10 people, so the recruitment programme was very successful. Participants (with the exception of the groups for Gypsies and Travellers, residents with learning disabilities, Muslim residents and residents with mental health issues) were recruited by random-digit telephone dialling from ORS' Social Research Call Centre. Such recruitment by telephone is an effective way of ensuring that the participants are independent and broadly representative of the wider community.
- 12.7 The groups for Gypsies and Travellers, residents with learning disabilities, Muslim residents and residents with mental health issues were recruited via a variety of gatekeepers including CommUNITY Barnet (an organisation that supports, promotes and coordinates an effective voluntary and community sector in the LBB). CommUNITY Barnet was recompensed for its time and efforts in assisting the recruitment.
- 12.8 Although ORS reached the desired number of participants for the majority of the groups, the recruitment for the learning disabilities group was particularly difficult, primarily because contributions had already been made to the consultation via the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board, the Carers' Board and at the Learning Disability Network. To compensate for the lower numbers, ORS sought to undertake depth telephone interviews and achieved an additional two contacts via this method.

- 12.9 In recruitment, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors, and the venues at which the focus groups met were readily accessible. People’s special needs were taken into account in the recruitment and venues.
- 12.10 Overall, participants represented a broad cross-section of residents and, as standard good practice, were recompensed for their time and efforts in travelling and taking part.

Discussion agenda

- 12.11 ORS worked in collaboration with LBB to agree a suitable agenda and informative stimulus material for the meeting, which covered the following topics:
- The financial context and financial implications
 - Library usage and values
 - Common features of the proposals
 - Three proposed options
 - Other alternatives.
- 12.12 The sessions were structured around a presentation devised by ORS and LBB to inform and stimulate discussion of the issues - and participants were encouraged to ask any questions they wished throughout the discussions.

Reporting

- 12.13 This section of the report presents the main themes and key points arising from the 12 focus groups. The opinions expressed were not always unanimous, but we have endeavoured to reflect the range of views expressed. Some important common themes emerged from the group discussions and these are reported below; but where issues related to a particular option, these have been highlighted. Many quotations have been used, not because we wish to endorse any views, but in order to illustrate some of the more common and important themes and issues.

Main Findings

Library usage

- 12.14 When asked about their library usage, many participants explained that they (and/or their children) visit libraries primarily to borrow books. Some of the many typical comments were:

I use library to borrow books. I think the library is great; I go there every two or three weeks (Older persons group)

I use North Finchley or East Barnet every other week to get books (Older persons group)

I use the library at North Finchley once a month; I tend to take out my books then (BME group)

I use Golders Green Library once a month to borrow books (BME group)

My daughter goes to Chipping Barnet because it's large and it's got a good range of books. She takes out a lot of books at a time. She always finds it very exciting... The school encourages her to go there and she goes about once a month (Parents' group)

I use Burnt Oak Library to take out books every now and then (Parents' group)

I go to the library quite a lot. I get the books out quite often... (Gypsy and Traveller group)

I've used the library for books on the Gypsy and Traveller community (Gypsy and Traveller group)

My daughter gets a lot of non-fiction books at the library (Learning disabilities group [carer])

I use Hendon and Burnt Oak Library to get out books (Young persons' group)

I use Chipping Barnet Library. I use it to borrow and read the books. I go about twice a week with my brother and my mum. (Young persons' group)

- 12.15 Many participants also use libraries to borrow CDs and DVDs (as well as books) – and/or to use the computers, internet and printing services:

I used to be in Church End Library a lot - I still hire a lot of DVDs from them (older persons' group)

I go to Friern Barnet Community Library about once a year. I took out a DVD last time I went (Young persons' group)

I use the library for the books, CDs and DVDs (BME group)

I use the library to take out DVDs and books (physical disabilities group)

My daughter uses the libraries...to get books and DVDs (Gypsy and Traveller group)

I use Church End Library. I will go there if I can't find a book I want to read at home or in the school library. Sometimes I will look at the CDs too... (Young persons' group)

I use the library to take out DVDs and books (Physical disabilities group)

Elderly people use the computers at library and get help from the staff (Older persons' group)

My elderly mother uses the library to use the computers (BME group)

I use the libraries in Barnet. I used to go there to use the internet before I got a laptop (Gypsy and Traveller group)

Libraries are good for printing out papers you need... (Gypsy and Traveller group)

Sometimes I go into the libraries to use the computers - I use the printers and do my emails and stuff. I don't have a printer and it's only 10p to print in black and white... (Learning difficulties group)

- 12.16 Participants with younger children use libraries to borrow children's books, but also attend various children-centred activities like storytelling and Rhyme Time:

I have a young son and Edgware Library provide a lot of baby time sessions for toddlers and children. We go to the library a lot to use the library services for that, especially before nursery. We go to the library every week (BME group)

There is a storytelling session for toddlers on Saturdays in my local library, which is good (parents' group)

I go to Rhyme Time with my baby sometimes (Gypsy and Traveller group)

The mother and baby groups are brilliant; there are women that read to the children. (Gypsy and Traveller group)

- 12.17 A common theme across all groups was the use of the libraries during childhood. Indeed, those who do not use libraries currently explained that they had done so as a child or had taken their children when they were younger. Indeed, the majority of participants at both non-user groups had used a library when they were young or had taken their children and/or grandchildren there (though they also said that they had stopped doing so when bookstores such as Waterstones and Borders became more mainstream and accessible):

When my children were small we used to use the libraries. It was an amazing way of getting to know the community and getting the children to read... (Non-user group)

I used the library a lot with my daughter when she was young, but then there were other ways to get information. Once you pass the age of nine it was more about going to book shops and getting books (Non-user group)

I used to love going to the library with my kids, but then Borders came along. I found it easier to buy the book as I have four kids. It was more cost-efficient to have books at home. (Non-user group)

- 12.18 Many participants across all groups use, or have used, the library for studying, doing their homework and research (including students who could possibly access resources at college or university libraries):

I use especially use Edgware and Hendon for research because they're bigger and have lots of books (BME group)

I'm doing an accountancy course with the Open University, so I use Hendon Library to study for my course. It's a quiet place for studying... (BME group)

I go to the library every week with my nine year old. I help her with her projects and reading... (Muslim group)

Libraries are good to study and get in the zone; my daughter uses the library like that (Non-user group)

I use East Finchley Library about twice a month to study (Young persons' group)

I don't go to the libraries very often, but when I do it's to help with my homework... (Young persons' group)

I find that the library is useful for research... (Physical disabilities group)

My daughter is studying for her A-levels in the local library in Finchley (Muslim group)

I used to go to the library to get books to study for my degree (BME group)

My 16 year old uses the library when she is revising for her AS exams (Parents' group)

I used to use the libraries a lot in my studying days, especially for my A-levels and my degree. I never bought books for university; I used to borrow them from the library (Parents' group)

Some of my friends go to the library to study for their A Levels... (Non-user group)

- 12.19 Indeed, with particular regard to studying, libraries are not only viewed as places from where to borrow books; many participants felt strongly that access to 'space' is important and explained that students (both young and old) require libraries as 'havens' in which to work:

Libraries are good for students to study, especially those who have too many people in the house (Mental health group)

When I was doing my postgraduate diploma it was so intense at home, so I used to use the library as a quiet place to study. (Muslim group)

- 12.20 Hendon Library was said to be particularly busy due to the large number of students from the adjacent Middlesex University requiring study space. One BME group participant claimed that *they are literally kicking out the students at closing time. People are being forced to leave the library.* As such, some participants argued for increased opening hours to allow more people to study after school and work:

Evening opening hours would be good for some students...for them to be able to do their homework. (Older persons' group)

- 12.21 The majority of participants across all groups agreed that library use has decreased in recent years due to digital expansion and new technology. Indeed, some explained that this is why they no longer use the library service:

I think the internet has made libraries less relevant for getting information (Non-user group)

I used to use the library quite a lot. I have the internet now though, which gives you everything you need... (Non-user group)

I use my iPad for magazines and things like that rather than libraries (Parents' group)

I was brought up going to the library. I think technology took over for me in the last 10 years; my library use went downhill... (Non-user group)

If I want a book these days I will go on Amazon rather than getting it from the libraries (Physical disabilities group)

I haven't used the libraries in a long time. Since the internet and computers have kicked in my library use got less and less (Muslim group)

Last time I went to the library was when I was in primary school. Nowadays - with technology - you can find everything you need to know on the internet. (Muslim group)

- 12.22 In addition, many participants in the non-user groups explained that, although they continue to read, they no longer need the library to do so because they download eBooks onto their Kindles or other such devices:

I like using my Kindle; I can get new books at midnight if I want to (Non-user group)

If I wanted to read I wouldn't go to the library; I'd download it on my phone or buy it (Non-user group)

I'm a Kindle reader; I don't use libraries. (Non-user group)

- 12.23 In light of the above, people recognised that borrowing books may no longer be as important in terms of the role of a library as it was in the past - though they still wanted to discuss the range and quality of the library stock, which they considered vital. Many spoke positively of the availability and variety of books, even in some of the smaller libraries:

I live in the suburb and I run a book group. Barnet has a long list of books where they have 30 copies; you can get books provided for the whole book group (Older persons' group)

North Finchley has excellent stock even though it's a small library (Older persons' group)

I'm impressed with the quality and stock of children book stock at my library (Parents' group)

When I do borrow books they have a good variety (Young persons' group)

I like the variety of books they provide (BME group)

In our libraries, we have a huge variety of stock sitting on our doorsteps. (Muslim group)

- 12.24 Participants in the older persons' group agreed that *it's impossible to have the same stock across each library* – but when books are unavailable, either because they are in other libraries or are out of stock, staff are apparently very willing to locate and supply them:

It's quite easy to get a book in stock in the library. If you ask them to get you a book they do (Older persons' group)

The stock in Hendon main library is very good. The smaller libraries aren't as good, but you can reserve books... (Muslim group)

- 12.25 A few people also suggested that children have more variety and choice in public libraries than can be found in school libraries:

School libraries cherry pick authors like JK Rowling and Roald Dahl but the libraries have an array of published authors. The children have more opportunity to openly read a little bit in non-school libraries (Parents' group)

You have the teenage section in Barnet libraries; we don't get that in the school library. (Young persons' group)

- 12.26 Less positively in terms of book range, some participants expressed disappointment with the lack of up-to-date reference books across all the libraries – and a few noted the lack of resources in specific interest areas:

There are too few references in Church End; there should be a Who's Who (Older persons' group)

When I went to my local library I couldn't find any local archive materials, so I had to travel miles away... The books were completely useless to be honest (Physical disabilities group)

The referencing in the libraries has always been bad. I used to be in IT and the reference books at the library were always dated (Physical disabilities group)

Sometimes you need to have very specific books for certain things like electronics. Some stock is just too specialist for libraries (Non-user group)

We couldn't find many books on the Gypsy and Traveller community in the library. (Gypsy and Traveller group)

- 12.27 Participants also had concerns about the availability of new stock: several were of the view that existing stock has been 'run down' and is in need of updating, and that multiple copies of popular books are required. In fact, a few people claimed to have stopped visiting libraries due to the outdated nature of their provision:

The stock in the libraries is very tired and old. The DVD section is also very dated (Non-user group)

After I finished my degree I didn't use the library that much. I got made redundant, so I went to the library to read books to brush up on my accounting knowledge to become more employable. The newest books were from 2007, which is no good. I feel let down by the library compared to the past (Parents' group)

It is true that the libraries are not updating their stock. They do have a 'new' shelf so they do get books but not many (Learning difficulties group - carer)

The revision guides in the libraries aren't up to date; they have the wrong examples and things like that (Young persons' group)

I think they should have more copies of the books (Young persons' group)

I used to use the books, but I don't anymore. They are not getting new stuff in. I think the library could do with having more interesting books... (Learning difficulties group)

- 12.28 Interestingly also, a few participants at the BME and Muslim groups now use libraries in neighbouring boroughs (Harrow and Haringey in particular) because they apparently have more choice and greater availability:

Sometimes I use the Harrow libraries; they have a better stock of books compared to Barnet libraries (BME group)

My daughter goes to university and she forgot her books when she came back for Christmas. She couldn't find any books in Barnet; however, when we went to Harrow the libraries had a large collection of the books she needed (BME group)

I used the civic centre library in Harrow and it was amazing. It always had the best books for me when I was doing my degree... (Muslim group)

The stock in Haringey libraries is better...they have more copies of books. The libraries in Haringey cater for all ethnicities and they have books in different languages. I wish Barnet had something like this. (Muslim group)

- 12.29 Accessing information and help with filling in forms or finding employment was also said to be an important library function and participants were typically positive about the knowledge and helpfulness of library staff in this respect. On this note though, a few people suggested that staff can be unhelpful, uninterested and generally apathetic - but it was acknowledged that this could be due to the fact that they are facing job losses and are overstretched and under-resourced. Further, some participants in the Muslim group alleged that some staff lack communication skills, which can appear discriminatory:

Haringey and other boroughs are so used to non-English speakers. The way they approach it is better. The libraries give these people a place to meet and have a voice. Barnet Libraries focus on limited areas of work (Muslim group)

The staff need to communicate better with other ethnicities. A smile and some acknowledgement would be enough; it's respect. I feel that they need some training on social skills. (Muslim group)

Benefits of libraries

- 12.30 When asked what they value most about the library service, the majority of participants across all groups referred to the positive role libraries play in children's development (both in terms of introducing them to literature and the activities they attend). Some typical comments were:

It's important for the next generation. Children need to be engaged in the use of libraries (Non-user group)

I think it's important to keep the libraries for children; it makes a huge difference to them (Older persons' group)

I used to be a headteacher; it's crucial to introduce children to literature (Older persons' group)

For my kids the library was a social thing: they'd go in and browse at the books and the DVDs. It was great. The library has always been a big part of their life (Parents' group)

It's good to introduce them to libraries early. It's good to introduce them to the books early (Parents' group)

I lived in Hackney and I found an old book in the library called "Teach Your Baby to Read". My baby first read and spoke when she was nine months old. This would not have happened if I didn't find it in the library. This shows the power of the library (Non-user group)

It's good for children to be around books, [library activities] help build social skills for children (Low income group)

Libraries are educational for kids, and it gives mum a break too (Mental health group)

Libraries are fun for the children. They can learn how to read books and how to talk to people (Muslim group)

Libraries have reading sessions with children. I think that is important for the next generation (Physical disabilities group)

The mother and baby groups are brilliant; there are women that read to the children (Gypsy and Traveller group)

Edgware do a lot of good things for children. There's a mother and toddler group, and a lot of people come there. (Learning difficulties group)

- 12.31 Participants in the Parents' and Muslim groups also felt that libraries can play a valuable role in instilling rules, respect and discipline in early childhood:

You go, you borrow and you have to give it back. You have to be quiet there and there are rules. It's good for the psyche and decorum of young children (Parents' group)

Quiet time to study in the library was very good for my children. You need to sit and study - you can't be chatting all the time; it teaches respect... It's a very good and controlled environment for people to revise. It teaches kids discipline (Parents' group)

It's also good for them to learn to follow rules and structure (Parents' group)

Libraries teach discipline to young children. (Muslim group)

- 12.32 Overall, the majority suggested that the presence of a library within a community is invaluable insofar as it enhances the lives of children and gives older people an opportunity to socialise and spend time in a warm, friendly environment:

There are some people who have the library as their only activity. The libraries are heated and comfortable (Muslim group)

Quite a few older people I know will go and sit in the library because it's warmer; it saves them from having to heat their own house. (Physical disabilities group)

Indeed, the issue of social isolation was raised in every group insofar as the library is thought to be a meeting point for a number of people who could potentially be *stuck at home*. For these reasons, participants across all groups made impassioned pleas to maintain - and even invest in - Barnet's library network.

Common Features of the Three Proposed Options

12.33 Prior to presenting the three proposed options for the future of library services in Barnet, participants were given the opportunity to discuss the principles that underpin them, including: maintaining the home and mobile library services; digital expansion and new technology; the 'open' library and unstaffed opening hours; the use of volunteers; and alternative delivery models.

Maintaining the home and mobile library services

12.34 A very small number of participants use or have used the mobile and/or home library services and were relieved to find out that LBB is proposing to maintain them:

I am glad they are maintaining the mobile library. I use the mobile library; it goes right outside my house and it goes right outside my daughter's school. (Physical disabilities group)

12.35 Non-users also strongly supported maintaining the two services, considering them essential for those who cannot otherwise visit a library and particularly for older residents and those with limited mobility. Some typical comments were:

I think it's very good that the mobile and home library are being maintained because people who are immobile can use the facilities (Learning difficulties group - carer)

It would be easier for people in a wheelchair who can't get to the library (Learning difficulties group)

It's quite difficult for a lot of people, so it's good that the home library scheme is being maintained. It's important to for these people to be mentally active (Physical disabilities group)

A lot of my friends' parents are very old, and they wouldn't be doing anything if it wasn't for the home library service (Physical disabilities group)

The mobile library is important for a lot of people that can't get out. These people rely on the service (Physical disabilities group)

I'm glad that they're maintaining the mobile libraries; it's a good option for a lot of people. (Muslim group)

Digital expansion and new technology

12.36 Participants generally supported the expansion of digital resources and felt this would complement what modern users require of a library service. Indeed, many feel that Barnet libraries should 'move with the times' in this respect:

I think digital is the way to go; it's so important (Non-user group)

I think that the libraries should use more technology in the future (Learning difficulties group)

I don't want to lose the libraries, but they need to change with the times. Children these days are clued up on technology with their iPads and laptops (Non-user group)

They could do with having some new technology; some of the computers in the libraries are very slow (Young persons' group)

Everything is going online and digital these days... We need to use this to our advantage with the libraries (Physical disabilities group)

Some people are housebound. It would be good if they had digital access to the library service. We don't need a static physical library everywhere (Physical disabilities group)

The world is digital. We have got to embrace it and we have to get on board [to] help the libraries. Why not take the libraries and use the space as a community space that embraces technology (Physical disabilities group).

- 12.37 Some participants made specific suggestions about what could be provided via libraries - and young people were particularly enthusiastic about improving the availability of tablets and eBooks to encourage more of their peers to visit libraries:

They could have a service like Netflix for books at the library (Non-user group)

The library should offer book downloads for rental. They should also rent Kindles. There's an argument to improve the technology of the services to make more books available to the elderly (Parents' group)

I remember one library in Barnet had an app you could download to rent eBooks and audio books. That was really good, but I'm not sure if they still do it. They should! (Young persons' group)

I think it would be good if they could have more Kindles and things like that in the libraries (Young persons' group)

I think eBooks are really good; you can take them out even if someone else has got it as well. Sometimes there are books that loads of people want; they are so much more accessible online. It's something that a lot of young people want...we all have iPads and phones (Young persons' group)

If you can't get to the library, being able to buy a book on the bus as an eBook is such a good idea (Young persons' group)

An online eBook thing would be good, because it returns it automatically; you don't have to worry about overdue books. (Young persons' group)

- 12.38 Furthermore, and perhaps surprisingly, the majority of participants in the older persons' group (who use the library to borrow books and will continue to do so in the future) agreed that *the extension of eBooks is a very good idea*.

- 12.39 Non-users fully supported digital expansion, suggesting that if libraries were to offer a digital service to enable them to rent eBooks or audio books they would be more inclined to use them. Even if the library service were to charge for this service, it was considered a cheaper alternative to buying eBooks.

- 12.40 When informed that libraries already offer eBooks and audio books, those who use tablets said that they would seek to find out more about this service and indeed may use it in future. They also suggested that LBB should invest in advertising the service to raise awareness.

- 12.41 On this note, participants in the physical disabilities group raised the issue of advertising and awareness more generally: they strongly advocated that LBB strive to ensure that residents know what their local libraries actually provide to increase usage:

The libraries need to advertise the free Wi-Fi more to market it to the relevant generation

The libraries need to promote its new services more. I have to go into a library to find out the services at the moment. I don't know what's in the libraries

We need to use media to bring the younger generation in the library. Let's use libraries as an advertorial space.

- 12.42 Some participants in the young persons' group also suggested ways in which the Council could raise awareness and improve perceptions of libraries amongst younger people:

I think libraries should tell schools that they have these new forms of book borrowing. They need to get the message out. If you say libraries in schools everyone sort of zones out. They need a new image of something. They could do it through social media

They should have posters around Barnet and in school advertising the new ways Barnet lets you borrow books. They could have them in shop windows and in school libraries. They should make the posters eye-catching too and colourful too – not the teal green they use for everything!

- 12.43 Despite the general positivity reported above, some caution was expressed about the expansion of technological services insofar as this would not suit all residents. While people did not discard the idea of such development, they felt that libraries should maintain its stock of books for those who are less able to use technology or those who simply prefer to read a 'physical' copy:

Some people prefer a traditional paper book in a library (Non-user group)

My wife can't use touch screens due to her disability; it's important that we keep some things paper-based (Older persons' group)

Not everybody can use a computer; I'm very much a book person. (Physical disabilities group)

- 12.44 A small number of participants were also critical of the growing proliferation of tablets and eBooks – both more generally and in libraries. Some typical comments were:

I don't like Kindles because they are so expensive; you aren't saving any money (Gypsy and Traveller group)

I'm against digital and Kindles in libraries; it takes away the soul of the library, being able to get books (Gypsy and Traveller group)

I don't think eBooks and things are a good idea. Our mums are constantly trying to get us off our iPads. If people are always on their iPad it stops them from communicating more. I'm on the internet most of my life; I'd prefer to go to the library (Young persons' group)

I don't think we should have too much digital stuff, because if you don't have many friends and things like that the library is a good place to socialise and meet people (Young persons' group)

My grandkids live in computers, so they don't have social skills and they don't know how to interact. They also don't know how to sift through information; they just cut and paste. We are going to have a generation that are very isolated. (Physical disabilities group)

- 12.45 Finally, a couple of participants at the older persons group were concerned that digital expansion and new technology could disadvantage those who rely on the advice and knowledge of library staff:

In the library you can go in and meet face-to-face and they can give you information. I like to go face-to-face rather than talking to machines

Digitalisation means we can afford to lose clerical staff, but I don't want to lose the knowledgeable staff.

'Open' library (and unstaffed opening hours)

12.46 Many participants across all groups felt they - and others - would benefit from increasing library opening hours to include more evenings and weekends:

It would be good for libraries to be open on Sundays because it would make parking easier (Older persons' group)

I would go to the library literally every day if Hendon Library was open until eight more often. I'd prefer it if libraries were open until ten (BME group)

Opening hours are a key issue for me. I finish work at five and I have to study. I'd really like to go to the library, but I just can't - they're not open. I wish one library closed later and one earlier so I could have options for opening times (BME group)

It would be a good idea if the libraries are open a bit later. We live in a community where people travel for work. (BME group)

12.47 Despite its potential to extend opening hours though, with the exception of the BME and young persons' groups, participants typically disapproved of the open library system, mainly due to concerns around personal safety and theft. Some typical reactions across the groups were:

I'm totally against unstaffed libraries; it's not safe (Older persons' group)

How do you keep order? How do you stop people from getting drunk and things like that? (BME group)

There would be no one there to make sure that teenagers are being quiet and behaving (Parents' group)

You might get some dodgy people going in the libraries if there was no staff there! I would be terrified. There are some sickos out there (Gypsy and Traveller group)

I would be scared about my daughter's safety if there was nobody in the library... (Learning difficulties group - carer)

The issue I'm most concerned with is safety. I wouldn't want to go to a library where there's no-one there at all. There are predators in this society (Physical disabilities group)

There might be trouble with alcohol and the homeless in this sort of library. Safeguarding is a big issue (Physical disabilities group)

Besides violence and theft, lots of homeless people might be attracted. (Mental health group)

12.48 In addition to commenting on their own personal safety, many participants also questioned the security of library stock within an open library and felt that, even with the use of CCTV, books and IT equipment would be prone to vandalism and theft:

What about security? People would steal books (Older person group)

My main objection to unstaffed libraries is vandalism (Older person group)

The person looking after the library on the CCTV will end up calling the police about vandals lighting books on fire and smoking (Non-user group)

What would stop you picking up a book and walking out with it? (Non-user group)

I think a lot of books would go missing in a library with no staff, so the Council would be paying more. (Young persons' group)

- 12.49 The potentially negative effect of unstaffed libraries on library users that require advice, assistance and technical support was noted by many participants as below:

Unstaffed libraries might be okay for me, but it might not be ok for people that can't do things for themselves (Learning difficulties group)

They should have at least one or two staff members. The staff need to be there to help people. There would be so many people using the phone number if there were no staff there and it would be difficult logistically. It seems very impractical (Learning difficulties interview)

Having staff there is important. What if you want to do your CV for the first time? There would be no-one to help (Gypsy and Traveller group)

I would not be happy to go into a building with no staff. If I forgot my password I wouldn't have anybody to help me (Learning difficulties group)

There needs to be at least one staff member present at the libraries in case there are any problems. There needs to be someone around to give advice and to instruct people. (BME group)

In fact, some non-users were of the view that librarians' skills are currently underutilised and that, rather than having unstaffed libraries, library users should be able to benefit from their wide-ranging knowledge:

I think we are missing a trick with librarians. They could provide services for historical references and things like that. They could have things about local history

Librarians have many talents; we need to tap into that

Librarians could provide careers advice.

- 12.50 Participants in the older persons' group were again most worried about staff availability and strongly supported the view that *the point of the library is that you can get help from someone*. They also made the following additional points:

My aunt recently died, so I went into the library to get a list of undertakers. They helped me. I couldn't do this without staff

I do a lot of research, so it's important to have the staff there to help me

A lot of older people go in there for company. They can talk to the librarians - it might be the only people they talk to all day. There might be some social isolation.

- 12.51 A few participants in other groups were also concerned about how unstaffed opening hours would affect older residents, particularly when using ICT services:

A lot of pensioners struggle with technology, so I don't think they would be able to use the computers without staff (non-user group)

Not everybody knows how to use the computers – elderly people especially need help from the staff. You see that a lot in the libraries (BME group).

- 12.52 The young persons' group was concerned that under 16s would need to be accompanied by an adult during unstaffed hours. This, they felt, would significantly restrict their future library access:

It's important for me to be able to go to the library by myself. If I wanted to go to an unstaffed library after school, I wouldn't be able to go because my parents would be at work. Staff should be there from 3pm until 8pm

Everyone under 16 would be badly affected by the card system

I think unstaffed is more awkward. If you are under 16 and want to go and get a book you would have to bring an adult. At the moment kids can go there to read and write without their dad or mum!

- 12.53 On the other hand, non-users felt strongly that if children under the age of 16 were allowed to visit an unstaffed library unaccompanied by a parent or adult, they would not feel comfortable visiting at such times:

If there are no staff, there's nobody to keep the order. There would be no-one there to supervise kids. I would feel less comfortable to go there to study. There needs to be somebody there (Non-user group)

- 12.54 One possible solution in both cases was made by a young person and a participant in the learning disabilities group:

They could have specific hours where volunteers can come in so that kids can go in by themselves (Young persons' group)

I would be happy if there were volunteers there instead of unstaffed. They could help me! (Learning disabilities group)

- 12.55 A very small number of participants supported the open library system as a means of increasing opening hours - and others suggested it could work in smaller, more rural areas (though perhaps not in the larger, busier libraries):

I like the idea of being able to go to library in the evening just to go to somewhere for peace and quiet (Gypsy and Traveller group)

I think it's perfectly logical for them to have staffed hours at certain times and unstaffed hours at other times. I don't see why anybody would object (Physical disabilities group)

I think unstaffed is a good idea, but I don't think it's viable for big libraries (BME group)

I can't imagine unstaffed libraries working anywhere that's not rural. (Parents' group)

Income generation

- 12.56 In terms of income generation, participants like the idea of co-locating a library with a coffee shop. One participant in the young persons' group cited Hendon as a good example of where this is already successful: "Hendon library has a coffee shop in there, it's amazing. All libraries should be like that". Other comments included:

Is there a way you can have a library within a business which is a café? They could have a really nice café and a library together. People go to nice cafés for an event (Parents' group)

I would like a decent space to sit down, read a book and have a coffee (Non-user group)

I would like to sit down in an environment where I can read my e-mails and get a coffee (Learning difficulties group)

I think if there was coffee shop style of library then it would bring more people between the old and young demographic (Muslim group)

I think they should generate some profit; have cafés like Hendon, make libraries more appealing, more like Starbucks, and make them more friendly. But you need to invest to start with. (Low income group)

- 12.57 Further, participants were reminded throughout the sessions that the Council must make significant savings and many (especially the older people) suggested that they introduce a charge on book borrowing and e-books. That said, those on low incomes and the elderly should, it was felt, be exempt, which in turn raised the issue of how this could be implemented:

Some people would be willing to pay 50p or £1 for e-Books; I'd be willing to do that to generate income for the libraries (Older persons' group)

I think the Council should start charging to borrow books. Children, students and deprived people shouldn't be charged. There are a lot of rich people in Barnet who could afford to pay for their books (Older persons' group)

I often pay for books in the charity shops then take them back; I'd be willing to pay a little bit for books at the library. They do it for CDs (Older persons' group)

I would rather using income generation to keep libraries open, like charging a nominal amount for renting books and eBooks. (Older persons' group)

Alternative delivery models

- 12.58 While most participants agreed that the staff are highly skilled and capable of running some aspects of the library service (such as stock), they were sceptical about how well they could manage and administer libraries:

They are librarians and aren't business people; it's a completely different role (Older persons' group)

Librarians would not be able to do administration with accountants and banks (Older persons' group)

Libraries are such a big enterprise that I'm not sure if the staff would be able to handle it. When it comes to the allocation of finance it gets difficult. The librarians have the knowledge of libraries and the local area, but management and accountancy is not in their remit. (Learning disabilities interview)

- 12.59 There was also some concern that a staff-owned mutual is not a sustainable alternative to a Council-run service:

I'm a probation officer and we have gone through semi-privatisation. One worry is about the contracts ending and what happens afterwards? You can't just work back (Older persons' group)

Maybe they would give the Council less money to the libraries if it was owned by staff. (Young persons' group)

- 12.60 There was, however, some support for this option, particularly in one of the non-user groups. Participants who supported this option did so on the basis that it has worked for other agencies (such as the Job Centre) and that staff could deliver a better service than LBB because *it is obvious that any*

local librarian is going to meet the needs of the local residents and staff would know a bit more than the Council.

- 12.61 Overall, the majority of people across all groups agreed that LBB should remain involved in running the library service – though it should be noted that some people felt unable to comment on this issue because they required additional information, particularly around funding and sustainability. They also questioned how this option could ‘save money’.
- 12.62 Following on from the discussion on mutuals, participants were asked for their views on other alternative delivery models such as outsourcing and working with organisations such as educational bodies.
- 12.63 The majority opposed outsourcing to a private operator, primarily as they did not feel delivering library services should be a profit-making enterprise. There was, however, some support for merging with an educational body insofar as there are potential efficiency benefits from collaborating with universities, colleges and schools (providing proper safeguarding measures are implemented):

They could have libraries in schools and merge them together; maybe a different entrance at the side of the school (BME group)

On the school compound you could have a portable sort of library. We could then use that library in the evening...only in the evening though, we don't want strangers coming in the school hours. It might take some pressure off the rest of the libraries (Learning difficulties group - carer)

Libraries teaming up with schools or colleges is a very good idea, because the schools would be able to do things in the library... (Learning difficulties group)

Merging with a school would help disabled children. When we go to pick them up we can use the library facilities. It would be great; school is a family place to meet (Learning difficulties group - carer)

Libraries could run in conjunction with the school syllabus - like when English students read Frankenstein and Of Mice and Men. I would like to be able to talk to other students about what they thought about the book. (Non-user group)

- 12.64 A few participants offered the following specific examples of possible mergers with educational bodies:

Hendon Library and Middlesex University

Hendon can merge with Middlesex University - it's a quick fix - we don't need all these options. You don't have to physically move the libraries. It's already there; it's all administrative. The buildings are literally next door to each other (BME group)

Could you link with Middlesex University and get them to replace the materials with their own stock? Or give it to the University to run? (Low income group)

East Finchley Library and Martin Primary School

They are right next door. It's the ideal place and it has all the facilities you need. (Physical disabilities group)

Three Proposed Options

Option One

^{12.65} When presented with Option One, participants typically desired clarification on the actual size represented by 540 square feet. Facilitators helped participants visualise the space, but also stressed that this would be the minimum size and that some libraries may exceed it.

^{12.66} Despite this reassurance, the possible reduction in library space, stock and activity was a significant worry for participants, who suggested that it would in turn lead to a decrease in the number of people visiting libraries and a non-sustainable service. Indeed, many participants questioned the feasibility of a library of such a size:

If it's going to be 540 square feet it's pointless. You wouldn't be able to fit a good selection of books (Older persons' group)

Is there any point in having a library that small? 540 feet is almost pointless (Non-user group)

How feasible is a small library like that? It's not feasible to have 10 titchy little libraries (Parents' group)

I don't think having libraries spread around the Borough matters if they are only going to be 540 square feet. (Non-user group)

^{12.67} Thinking about stock and equipment, many people could not comprehend what could be provided in a library of this size and assumed that the whole range of service provision would have to be downsized significantly:

I think having libraries that small is bad. You can only fit a certain amount of books and people in those libraries (Young Persons' group)

There would be no computers in the smaller libraries - it would be books only (Non-user group)

I would prefer to go into a library with a lot of books. My kids need to be able to see all the books so they can pick out the ones like with the pictures - you can't have that with a click and collect at a smaller library (BME group)

You wouldn't be able to have much variety in these libraries. You can't have fiction, non-fiction, comics, academic books, DVDs and CDs (BME group)

If the room is that small where are you going to put the books and computers? (Physical disabilities group)

They would be squeezing too many genres into a small space. You wouldn't be able to fit many computers or desks into a small space. (Parents' group)

- 12.68 It is clear then that participants value the 'space' offered in libraries (including study space) and were worried that this would be lost if they were reduce in size:

How would people fit in libraries that small? People would be like battery chickens! (Older persons' group)

I don't think they can make the smaller libraries any smaller than they already are; there wouldn't be any room for people. I don't think the staff would have enough room to help people in smaller libraries (Learning difficulties group)

It might be difficult to cater for people that want to sit down and read the newspaper in these smaller libraries. I'm sceptical about the space. (Learning difficulties group - carer)

How can I take my kid to the library to learn to read if there are loads of kids screaming in such a small room? (Gypsy and Traveller group)

There should be more rooms for kids and open space. How are kids going to play and dance in these smaller libraries? (Gypsy and Traveller group)

- 12.69 Other cited potential consequences of library size reductions were: an increase in social isolation as a result of older people staying at home rather than spending time at the library; and a detrimental impact on those with Learning Disabilities (who value open space):

A lot of older people don't have enough money for heating all day, so they might turn off the heating and come and stay at the library – they wouldn't be able to do this in smaller libraries. Where are these people going to go? It's not going to bring the community together; it's going to bring isolation (Learning difficulties group - carer)

I hold a group for people with learning difficulties. I just can't see them functioning in rooms this small...open space with books is important. (Muslim group)

- 12.70 In terms of location, when presented with a map showing the distribution of the four core libraries and ten smaller libraries, participants typically responded by suggesting that the former are not evenly distributed, affecting access for residents living in certain parts of the borough:

The core libraries should be more evenly distributed throughout the borough (Non-user group)

On the map, some of the libraries need to be spread out more (Non-user group)

I think they need to spread out the bigger libraries in this option so that certain people have better access to them (Young persons' group)

The top left hand corner of the map is totally empty! (BME group)

The libraries need to be spread out a bit more. (BME group)

- 12.71 In considering geographical distribution, a few participants made observations about specific libraries as below:

Burnt Oak and Colindale are too close to together (Older persons' group)

I think they should make North Finchley a main library, so that the core ones are more spread out (Gypsy and Traveller group)

What's the point in having a library in Hendon and Colindale? (Muslim group)

They are making the Colindale library to appeal to the people in the new modern flats... There are already libraries to cater for that area. (Parents' group)

- 12.72 Despite the above, there was a degree of support for this option insofar as it would still offer a library service, albeit in a slightly different (some felt more cost-effective) way:

The good thing about this is that money would be saved on staff and rent rates (Learning difficulties group - carer)

I don't mind the smaller libraries. You still have the option of borrowing books. It could be a come and go sort of thing. If you want to sit down you could go to Colindale; it's not far (Learning difficulties group - carer)

I think having four large libraries and 10 small ones is a good idea. The four large libraries would be supported by the smaller 10 ones dotted around the borough... (Learning difficulties group)

I like this option because it fits all communities. You still have the four larger libraries. The smaller libraries would be used as more digital libraries. There would still be staff in the smaller libraries sometimes to point people to the local events; that is not going away. The small libraries could be drop-in places for books too (Muslim group)

The smaller libraries could cater for the elderly and families - it could work. (Parents' group)

- 12.73 It was also said that the additional space freed up as a result of Option One could be rented out for community good - or for something related to the library service in the form of, say, a bookshop:

If the space is used for something like a community hall, then that would be good. I wouldn't like it if it was just commercial space though; the community would lose that space (Non-user group)

They could use the space for community use. You don't have to make money for commercial things. It's possible to make money from ICT courses and things like that (Non-user group)

The room that they sell off could become a bookshop; something that serves the community and is related to the library service. There would be a sense of community. Libraries have to be community-orientated. (Muslim group)

- 12.74 Some participants weighed this option against the possibility of library closures and, on balance, showed some support for it (while still generally opposing the reduction of library space):

I would rather have smaller libraries, but open. If I had to compromise, I would have this option (Older persons' group)

I think it's good that they aren't closing the libraries completely - at least there's something there (BME group)

I'm okay with smaller libraries. Some of the libraries are really big, and not all the space is always used... I would prefer libraries to be smaller than for them to close...I prefer this option to Option Two (BME group)

Option One seems to be the best; those core libraries make it good. It's better than closing (Gypsy and Traveller group)

I don't think it's a good idea to close too many libraries. Some small libraries are good if it's someone's local library (Young persons' group)

The good thing about this library is no closures. I don't want any libraries to close to be honest (Muslim group)

I would rather keep the libraries open and smaller than closing them. (Older persons' group)

Option Two

^{12.75} On balance, there was more support for Option Two than Option One on the basis that the total reduction in total library space is lower and the remaining libraries would be more suited to residents' needs:

I prefer this option to Option One because the libraries would be more likely to have the stock - even if it takes longer to get there (BME group)

This option is the lesser of three evils (Non-user group)

I like this option more than Option One because it keeps the bigger libraries (Young persons' group)

I like this option because it doesn't have as much reduction in library space as Option One (Muslim group)

I like this option and agree with it (Learning difficulties group)

I like this option, because the libraries that are kept open stay the same size as they are now. (Young persons' group)

^{12.76} It was also said that this option would result in the loss of only the less used, less viable libraries and the redevelopment of some existing libraries, meaning fewer but 'better' services and more potential for entrepreneurialism:

I think they should keep and improve the bigger libraries and close the smaller ones as people won't use them as much as the big ones (Learning difficulties group)

I think they could close the smaller libraries down and make the remaining libraries bigger – that would make up for the libraries that are lost (Young persons' group)

I would rather have less libraries, but of greater quality (Physical disabilities group)

I prefer this option to Option One, because the libraries would be a better environment. (Muslim group)

If the libraries are large and there is space for coffee shops and diversity, then I think this is a very good option. (Non-user group)

Indeed, a participant in the learning disabilities group made the case for centralising the library service even further with three larger, better quality libraries:

You could have three centralised libraries, which would bring the staff costs down. I think I would be happy if the smaller libraries were within three kilometres and I could get there by bus. I would be happy to make that sacrifice for the Council.

^{12.77} One issue of some debate was the proposal to close Burnt Oak Library and develop a new one at Colindale. Many questioned the rationale behind this, especially considering the amount of money that has been spent on Burnt Oak, its location (in a deprived area) and the fact that it is one of the borough's busier libraries:

They spent over a million on Burnt Oak recently and now there's an option to close it - that's not good (Parents' group)

Burnt Oak Library is always busy; people use it to do their taxes and things like that (Non-user group)

Burnt Oak Library serves the area - it's quite a poor area. People can go there to find out about their benefits and things like that (BME group).

For these reasons, it was argued that under Option Two Burnt Oak should stay, and the proposal to build a new library in Colindale rejected.

12.78 Conversely, others said they would be happy to see the closure of Burnt Oak, Edgware and Mill Hill libraries if the proposed new development at Colindale library is of sufficiently high quality:

I'm okay with them closing down Burnt Oak if they build the brilliant new one at Colindale. This seems like quite a good option (Non-user group)

Between Edgware and Burnt Oak - I would rather have a bigger library there even if it takes me longer to get there (BME group)

Edgware, Burnt Oak and Mill Hill are too close. I like this option because they are taking the closest libraries off the map. People will be able to access other nearby libraries in their place easily. (Learning disabilities group - carer)

12.79 Though, overall, there was more support in the focus groups for Option Two than Option One, a significant number of participants did not support it on the grounds that they do not want to lose 'any more' libraries and that access to alternative sites may be difficult for some people:

They have closed so many libraries in Barnet. It's getting to the point where they can't close any more (Older persons' group)

Barnet are selling the family silver. They are selling valuable assets to make up for the budget shortfall. Libraries should be endorsed and promoted rather than being reduced in numbers (Parents' group)

Once the libraries are gone, they are gone for good. We shouldn't get rid of them... (Non-user group)

I don't like the idea of closing libraries. What if people want to go there to learn after school? (Young persons' group)

Some of those six libraries could be somebody's local library. Some people can't get to the libraries that are further away (Young persons' group)

I don't think libraries should be closed. For example, Burnt Oak library is very useful because lots of local people use it; same goes for the one at Graham Park. If any of those closed it would affect a lot of people. Some people may have to get a bus to get the library, and most people don't have bus passes. (BME group).

12.80 Participants also highlighted the impact of library closures on particular community groups and residents such as the elderly; the disabled; Gypsies and Travellers; and the less affluent:

We are all able to get to these libraries. My elderly neighbour loves Mill Hill for magazines and technology books. He's on a mobility scooter and he's 91. If Mill Hill closes he won't be able to go to

Hendon. He would have to take two buses to get to Hendon. If they close Mill Hill, he will never go to a library for the rest of his life (Parents' group)

Some elderly people are lonely and they want a chat. We would isolate them by closing the libraries (Parents' group)

Some elderly people...want to feel younger and do things on an ad hoc and impromptu basis. You would be taking their options away from them (Parents' group)

Libraries are such an important part of life for older people...it's a part of their social care... Where else will we go when we get old? (Parents' group)

I am against closing libraries because disabled people need to easily access them (Learning difficulties group)

If they close Golders Green and Childs Hill that would affect the Traveller children (Gypsy and Traveller group)

The libraries are set up for poor people. We shouldn't let them take the libraries away. I'm against this option. (Gypsy and Traveller group)

- 12.81 There was criticism of the stated aim under Option Two that '95% of people in Barnet are able to reach a library in less than 30 minutes using public transport' - with some arguing that 30 minutes is too long to travel to a facility that should be as local as possible and not accessible only via often lengthy and complicated journeys:

I don't like the idea of a library that is half an hour away, because it takes it away from the community (Older persons' group)

The half an hour public transport thing is not good. What if a mother and baby had to get a bus that half an hour there and back? Libraries should be within walking distance for all residents (Non-user group)

Having the half an hour travel time is going to cause complications for older residents (Non-user group)

I think if we lost these libraries we would get rid of a section of the community. Public transport can be quite difficult. Some people would get quite isolated. (Muslim group)

- 12.82 Despite some support for income generation through using the space that would be freed up as a result of this option, there was concern over the long-term plans for the libraries that would close. Participants desired clarification as to what would happen to these sites and how they would generate income.

- 12.83 A number of participants were happy for LBB to sell off the sites and to reinvest any revenue gained back into the service - though others (at the BME group in particular) expressed caution and argued that renting them out to ensure continued income generation would be more sustainable:

Number Two is a much better idea providing that they don't sell the land off. They should rent it out and make money for the library. They need to carry on that income generation (BME group)

I'm with this option if Barnet don't sell off the assets; the library service should rent them to make money for the libraries. (BME group)

- 12.84 Thinking about location, when presented with a map showing the proposed distribution of libraries under Option Two, the consensus was that it offers more geographical equity in terms of core libraries than Option One:

I think Option Two is a bit better than the first one, because the spread of the libraries is better (Parents' group)

There seem to be more options with this one; the spread of the libraries is greater (Non-user group)

There's a library for every area in this option. East Finchley residents could use North Finchley; South Friern residents could use East Barnet; and so on (Non-user group)

I think the libraries are evenly distributed for this option (Learning difficulties group - carer)

I like this option best because of the spacing of the libraries. (Learning difficulties group)

- 12.85 That said, some participants in the younger persons' group disagreed: *North Finchley and Friern Barnet are about five minutes away from each other; they need spreading out. Those smaller libraries are way too close...the medium ones more spread out would be better.*

Option Three

- 12.86 When presented with Option Three, the majority of participants were perfectly happy to support the use of volunteers and accepted that there are members of the community who would be willing to work in this capacity:

I think a lot of people would be interested in volunteering (Non-user group)

I would happily volunteer (Older person group)

We have more retired people these days. Lots of people would be keener to do volunteering at the library, which could work (BME group)

Many retired and elderly people have a lot of time and would be more than willing to volunteer. You'd be surprised how many people are out there. (Muslim group)

- 12.87 In addition, many felt the library service would benefit from attracting volunteers who can bring a wide variety of skills to improve it:

A good idea would be to provide extra help for kids that are struggling at school. I used to be a maths teacher and I'd be willing to volunteer to help those kids (Non-user group)

A lot of people retire at 55 (like those in education), so a lot of these people could use their skills to help the community and volunteer at the library. It's a great idea (Non-user group)

There are a lot of educated people could go into the libraries and do voluntary work. They can help to keep these libraries open. (Older persons' group)

- 12.88 It was also said that library-based volunteer opportunities could be of value to young people (both as an useful addition to their CVs and as a means of helping their peers) and unemployed people (in the form of training and development):

A lot of 16 years olds could get good experience for their CV by volunteering in the library. Encouraging volunteering is important (Non-user group)

I think it would be good to have young people volunteering at the library; it would mean that they could put it on their CV (Young persons' group)

I think it would be good to have volunteers who are quite young - fresh out of the college - to volunteer, so that they could relate to the younger people and be more familiar with the work they need help with (Young persons' group)

If my kid was unemployed I think volunteering at the library would be a great way of getting experience. (Muslim group)

So many people are unemployed, but so many of them are educated. They are wasting their life away and their talents could be used (Older persons' group)

People who are on jobseekers allowance could be offered a job and trained at the library; especially the ones who are educated and literate. (Physical disabilities group)

Indeed, a carer at the learning disabilities group noted that *the computer classes have lots of volunteers there, and they help a lot. Sometimes my daughter and I get stuck on the computers and the volunteers have been able to help us.* Further, a participant in the Muslim group was of the view that *volunteers are a good way to save money.*

^{12.89} Despite supporting the use of volunteers though, the majority of participants did not support the idea of 'community libraries' whereby there are no librarians involved in the management and facilitation of the service. The general sense was that LBB should 'look after the few librarians it has left' and that: the quality of the library service would be negatively affected; the community-run libraries would not be sustainable and would inevitably close in future; and that volunteers would be from a certain demographic and would thus not cater for the diversity of the area:

We should look after the few librarians that we have... (Older persons' group)

Some libraries use volunteers. You can tell straight away if you're talking to a volunteer. Sometimes they aren't trained properly (Older persons' group)

The moment you let amateurs in on it, the service will diminish. (Older persons' group)

I don't think they would be able to maintain the quality of the services with volunteers... (BME group)

I think you need to hold onto staff; volunteers aren't as skilled as the paid workers. (Non-user group)

There are other problems: how many volunteers would there be? How long would they be willing to help out? (Learning difficulties group - carer)

Volunteering has to be sustainable. Sometimes it waxes and wanes. I'm not sure if libraries could be sustained to the level that communities expect if they were run by volunteers (Non-user group)

The volunteers might not be reliable and might not turn up (Older persons' group)

I'm elderly and my age group has become the average volunteer, which I'm not sure is an entirely good thing (Non-user group)

^{12.90} Further, it was said that: *'I don't agree with the voluntary system. There are things you might not want volunteers from the local community to know. You might want to take Fifty Shades of Grey and not want them to know; or you might want to take a book about getting a job when you don't want them to*

know you've lost your job. You need a professional librarian to deal with that with professionalism, not a local volunteer'. (Parents' group)

- 12.91 Some focus group members were aware of the community-run library at Hampstead Garden Suburb and although most could not comment on its success, they were aware that the area has a 'tight-knit community' with willing volunteers who will work together to support their library. In contrast, some of the areas suggested for community libraries under Option Three were said to lack this kind of community spirit:

Garden Suburb is a very tight-knit community; I can see it working there. It's going to be much more difficult in other areas. It might not work in East Finchley and Edgware. (Muslim group)

- 12.92 Those who did have some knowledge and experience of the aforementioned community library did not consider it to be a positive alternative to the current system – and the general feeling was that the library service is a professional one that would suffer greatly from not being managed and run by professional librarians:

They discriminate against the Garden Suburb Library because it's not in the computer system now. It's not in the library network. I'm worried that these volunteer libraries are going to be cut off (Older persons' group)

Community libraries don't work. Southern Friern just didn't work. As a library it's pretty naff - there's no structure to it. (Parents' group)

The library service is a professional service and shouldn't be run by volunteers... (Parents' group)

It's a librarian's job to run a library; you need those skills. I don't think it can be run by volunteers. It's a trained profession (Learning difficulties group - carer)

I don't agree that volunteers could run a library completely without the help of professionals. (Physical disabilities group)

Therefore, most concluded that a more acceptable proposal would be to keep a small number of skilled librarians and use volunteers in a supporting capacity:

I'd like a happy medium: one full-time librarian that goes to three different sites and helps out volunteers. They could have more part-time librarians too who are supported by volunteers (Non-user group)

They couldn't run a library purely on volunteers; there would need to be paid staff in libraries too - a skeleton crew (Non-user group)

Volunteers could be used to stack the shelves and things like that. Librarians are better suited for other tasks (Physical disabilities group)

Why not have 50/50 volunteering instead of all or nothing? A lot of people would feel more part of it - more like the Citizen's Advice model. It's important to have volunteers working to a paid manager. (Mental health group)

- 12.93 The only group to voice a different view in support of Option Three was the Gypsy and Traveller group, whose participants explained that a community library would allow members of the Traveller community to get involved in running a local service. As one participant explained: "we could have community representatives for Gypsies and Travellers in these community-run libraries. The Travellers

would then have people to relate to. There would be a barrier between Traveller children and country people - that barrier isn't there between two Travellers".

- 12.94 In addition, all participants in one of the non-user groups agreed that if there was a choice between libraries closing or being kept open through the use of volunteers, they would choose the latter.
- 12.95 Finally with regard to Option Three, when presented with the proposed geographical distribution of libraries, some participants noted that those proposed to be community-run are concentrated in a small area - resulting in an apparently impossible requirement for a large number of volunteers from a relatively constrained pocket of the population.

Alternatives?

- 12.96 Most participants felt the Council should consider alternative ways of running its library service in future. Typically, people strongly supported the idea of 'community hubs': that is, libraries co-located with other community-based services, particularly leisure and social activities. Some typical comments were:

You could have a community hub with a leisure centre, a swimming pool, a library and a coffee shop. They could amalgamate all those services (Non-user group)

A cafe and a leisure centre next to a library would have a community vibe. It would just work (BME group)

Libraries are part of complexes in other cultures. One parent could take one child to the library and the other could take the other swimming. They could then all have lunch together. It would be more of an outing then (BME group)

I'd like a big community library where people can come in and learn; maybe they'd have yoga and tai chi classes too. I'd rather one big library than that is supported by the mobile library than a small library where people don't care (Physical disabilities group)

I'd like the libraries to become the centres of our community again. You've got these tax-evading companies that are becoming community hubs like Starbucks. We need to bring this back to the libraries. There could be a social factor of going to the library to have a coffee (Non-user group)

Other boroughs have libraries with restaurants and bars and places where you can do yoga and keep fit. It's modern, it's nice and it's got security. (Physical disabilities group)

- 12.97 Some specific ideas were proposed: relocating libraries into existing venues with high footfall such as Finchley Lido for example:

Why not have the libraries where the leisure centres are. Why can't we have all that in one place? I think this would work at Finchley Lido. They could have a big library there. There would be more footfall at a library combined with a leisure centre. It would have a community vibe. There would be an info desk. There is plenty of parking too (BME group)

It would be good if they could fit a library into the Finchley Lido area. Lots of families go there to take their children swimming and to go to parties. (Muslim group)

12.98 Finally, the prospect of raising council tax was discussed in some groups, with a small minority supporting an increase to support retaining (or indeed improving) the library service. Some typical comments were:

I would be happy to pay a bit more for my council tax if I knew it went to the libraries (Older persons' group)

I think council tax could be raised to make a bit of money (BME group)

I disagree with the Council bragging for not putting Council Tax up. I would rather have had some council tax increases (Parents' group)

I wouldn't mind an increase in council tax, but not too much. I'd rather them spend the money more productively (Parents' group)

Us, as residents in London boroughs, had to pay for the Olympics with our council tax, so why can't we pay to keep the libraries? (Parents' group)

I would rather them put the council tax up than do any of these options. We are living in a wealthy borough. I'm a poor pensioner and I'm willing to pay extra for library services. (Non-user group)

13. Deliberative Events with Members of the Public

Introduction

- 13.1 Over three consecutive evenings in early February 2015 a series of deliberative events were held in three locations across the borough. These were two-hour long open-invitation events for the general public and their purpose was to explain in more detail the content of the consultation document and introduce additional information in response to questions. This, it was intended, would facilitate more informed and detailed discussions between the Council and the public about the libraries options proposals.
- 13.2 Each event followed a similar format and was divided into two 60-minute sections. The first session took place in plenary and was designed to provide participants with information about: the savings the Council is seeking to achieve through changes to library services; the reasons it wants to make these savings; and the three proposed options. The session was led by a senior Council officer and concluded with them leading a question and answer session.
- 13.3 The second section was chaired by ORS and Shared Intelligence and took place in smaller groups. Having heard about the three options and the reasons behind them, participants were asked to discuss and propose alternative options for the library service which might also achieve similar levels of savings.
- 13.4 A total of 43 members of the public attended the deliberative events: there were 11 at the first, 16 at the second and a further 16 at the third.

Discussion themes

- 13.5 The emphasis of the discussion at each deliberative event differed slightly, but some consistent discussion themes emerged, as did similar ideas about potential alternatives to the three options proposed by the Council.
- 13.6 The discussion themes on alternatives can be grouped into three categories: cross-cutting issues; specific alternative proposals for generating income in order to offset the savings requirement; and more comprehensive alternative models for the library service which might achieve net savings in different ways to the three published options.

Cross-cutting issues

Trust

- 13.7 Trust between the Local Authority and the public was a theme raised at all three events. Participants felt that many in the borough do not trust that the Council is acting sincerely in this consultation (or indeed in consultations about other local matters). Various specific examples were given to illustrate this point.

- 13.8 Participants suggested that, if there were a greater degree of mutual trust, it might be easier to build a collaborative approach to confronting the budget pressures faced by the library service and create a workable and imaginative model for the future.
- 13.9 In this context, ‘more imaginative’ meant ideas such as: exploiting the role of libraries in terms of economic resilience; meeting the community’s knowledge needs in new ways; and more intensive use of the library service to support educational attainment. In contrast though, it was felt that low levels of trust tend to limit debate and encourage residents to take a defensive stance and argue for the status quo – mainly because they fear any change will be used as an opportunity to diminish the service rather than increase its impact. In essence, views become polarised.
- 13.10 However, as can be seen below, all three groups did go on to offer a number of creative ideas as alternatives to the options published by the Council.

Council tax levels

- 13.11 Although council tax is mentioned in the options paper, participants at all three events felt that a council tax increase should have been presented as an option, which would in turn have changed the underlying arithmetic of the budget and need for savings. Participants at one event in particular felt this would have been a very useful way to frame the options and choices and would have generated more productive public discussion.

Specific alternatives

- 13.12 **Using school new-build and refurbishment projects** - this stemmed from a discussion on the overlap between the role of libraries and efforts to raise children’s literacy, support study skills, and build a culture of lifelong learning, as well as the obvious expansion of school provision in the borough. The suggestion was that new-build schools and major school refurbishments offer opportunities to renew and rebuild libraries that are more suited to financial constraints and community needs. Indeed, while moving libraries into existing schools was acknowledged to be difficult due to physical access and layout challenges, these issues, it was felt, could be solved at the design stage in the case of new-builds or refurbishments. The general sense was that co-locating in this way would increase pupils’ access to resources and improve provision for the general public.
- 13.13 **Rent-out space to complementary or related services** – participants heard in the first part of the deliberative events that a £3 million capital budget has been allocated to implement the libraries proposals. A number of people suggested that, rather than using this capital budget to reduce the size of library premises, it could be used to reconfigure libraries so they can host other complementary public services. These services would be required to pay rent, but it was felt that this would almost certainly be less than what they would be paying for exclusive use of premises elsewhere. Jobcentres were mentioned as prime candidates, especially because of their need for assisted computer access for jobseekers. This, it was said, could also help reduce overall staffing needs – for example the library could be operational with just one staff member but this would not be lone-working as Jobcentre staff (or whichever service was co-located) would also be on duty in the same space.

Comprehensive alternative models

- 13.14 **Create public services hubs** - the ‘rent space to complementary services’ suggestion led to a more developed version of the idea. That is, rather than bringing other services into libraries, instead to

create combined hubs incorporating library services (books, information, literacy support and internet access) with other face-to-face public services. This could include Jobcentre consultations, social care interviews, NHS/public health information and support, and possibly others.

13.15 **Meeting the savings target halfway** - a group at one event used the second part of the session to develop a single alternative option. Their starting point was to aim for £1.42 million in net savings as part of a new business model which would deliver an improved and modernised library service. While only delivering half the target savings of £2.85m, they believed that if Elected Members adopted this option, they (the Members) would benefit from greater public support and buy-in for the plan than is being shown for any of the Council's current options. This group also felt that, were they to go further in developing this option, the current library team should be involved in testing the model and examining how to make more use of and get more value from existing buildings. Library staff would, it was said, have an unique insight into the current service that no-one else has or could adequately guess at.

13.16 The main features of the model to deliver £1.42m net annual savings were:

- A long-term strategic aim of maximising Section 106 deals to renew the library estate (with the goal of replicating, as opportunities arise, more Grahame Park and Church End type redevelopments);
- Offering Middlesex University added value services for their students (especially at Hendon) in return for the University paying for these enhanced benefits;
- Offering to host (for a commissioning fee) services that serve demographic groups which overlap with library user-ship – for example Age UK, youth services, older people's services or a combination. The rationale was that these services are almost certainly under pressure to cut their overheads, including office costs;
- Launching a major programme of skills courses and classes with strong links to library themes (such as literacy, writing, digital skills, knowledge management and study skills). Some, it was suggested, would be organised by the library and some by groups that hire library space;
- Entering into sharing agreements with neighbouring councils for back office library functions such as HR, library-specific IT support, building maintenance and software licences;
- Begin hosting evening events at times libraries would normally be closed. The main purpose would be income generation, made possible because these could be overseen by junior staff assisted by volunteer ushers and greeters.
- Opening coffee shops where feasible as a cost-neutral way to: make room hire and classes more attractive; drive footfall; and create an opportunity to offer catering at events;
- Introducing Amazon/Doddle delivery lockers to drive footfall in cost-neutral way;
- Exploiting opportunities for advertising and sponsorship instead of proposed new income from new fines and charges for children.

13.17 **Creation of a staff-owned mutual** - another group used the second half of the event to build an option in which the library service became a staff-owned mutual. This model was similar to the one described in the 'meet halfway' discussion, suggesting that participants in both groups may have discussed these issues beforehand. The model was, broadly:

- To begin by convening a group involving current library staff, users and other interested parties;

- Converting the service into a new employee Mutual or Trust (the rationale being to strengthen leadership focus in the service, increase grant-seeking ability, and secure Non-domestic Business Rates savings on premises);
- Introducing some form of hypothecated tax revenue for libraries (a libraries precept similar to the new Westminster Parish model);
- Moving to a broader 'curriculum' of library services and activities, with strategic emphasis on revenue generation and fundraising balanced with reading, information access and literacy;
- Creating closer links with school leadership teams, children's centre managers and youth services with the aim of focusing efforts around literacy and learning and achieving economies of scale, especially through premises and staffing (Pimlico Library was cited as an example that had inspired this suggestion);
- Entering into shared back-office and administrative agreements with other boroughs, which could be easily achieved by joining an existing back-office sharing group of Councils;
- Using library space more intensively in two respects:
 - To contribute to the strategic goals of other parts of the Council by offering space and support for individuals starting new businesses (the Library Lab in Willesden Green was a cited example [<https://librarylablondon.wordpress.com/gallery/>] as was, internationally, Tel Aviv [<http://www.thelibrary.co.il/>]). Both apparently play an active role in small business start-up support and are remarkably similar
 - To generate room hire income from business meetings and workspace by the hour or by the day (similar to the Regus/MWB offer) - with similar service standards and prices to commercial offer, but with stronger links to skills and knowledge (not dissimilar to the Impact Hub model in Westminster and Kings Cross);
- Revenue-orientated events – including music of different genres, jazz, classical, folk, contemporary (similar to Get it Loud in Libraries [<http://www.getitloudinlibraries.com/>]);
- Coffee shops, good Wi-Fi and retail to drive footfall and add revenue.

14. Staff Focus Groups

Introduction

- 14.1 It was originally intended that ORS facilitate four focus groups with library staff, however the level of interest was such that only two groups took place. The 18 members of staff who attended these two groups were asked why they felt other staff had turned down the opportunity to do so; the main reason offered was a feeling that their views would not make a difference to the eventual outcome because decisions have already been made by the Council:

A lot of people feel that they wouldn't be listened to even if they gave reasonable suggestions. We recently had a staff survey filled with promises - now the general feeling is that people aren't interested in the staff

A lot of people think that this consultation doesn't matter and that they have already decided. According to rumours that are coming out that is the case.

- 14.2 Nonetheless, a productive and constructive discussion was had at both sessions, which are reported below.

Benefits of libraries

- 14.3 The benefits of libraries in combatting social isolation (especially amongst vulnerable members of society) were noted by staff – who also argued that their presence in the community is beneficial to other services insofar as the social interaction they offer may prevent, say, older people from accessing more ‘official’ help elsewhere:

For some people libraries are much more than books; it might be where the only place an elderly person speaks to someone all day

We have to support mothers who are stuck at home. Sometimes we get letters from mums saying we save them from post-natal depression. Those Rhyme Time sessions are so important

If the library service is decreased then there may be a burden on other services. Older people might not get the social interaction they want so they may turn elsewhere.

- 14.4 The fact that the current library network offers local access to the service for most people was also considered essential – and it was anticipated that many residents would cease using the facilities altogether if they can no longer visit them easily:

Some elderly people and single parents can't feasibly travel long distances carrying books. They won't bother doing it.

Common features of all three options

Alternative delivery models

- 14.5 Lengthy debates were had in both groups about the possible merits and drawbacks of a staff owned mutual for the library service. Some participants could certainly see advantages to such a model of delivery, namely that it would allow: library professionals to run their own service; more autonomy and freedom in terms of, say, stock and discretionary charging; charitable status and associated fundraising activities; and non-payment of rent on buildings:

It's not tried and tested yet, but in theory there are a lot of benefits to it

I like that there would be library professionals in control of library services

In theory this idea might be good, as the people who are running it would have a vested interest in it

I think it gives freedom; you can decide which services you charge for and which ones you can't

A benefit of a mutual is that we are a library service and they could pay us more for other facilities like ICT and English lessons...

We would be able to choose which stock and books we get in, which would be good

Becoming a staff mutual would allow us to become a charity so we could run our own fundraisers and things like that

Being a staff mutual would allow us to make money out of things that we wouldn't normally be able to make from

We wouldn't have to pay rent on the buildings.

- 14.6 Concerns, though, were around: sustainability; changing terms and conditions; and the potential for a target- and profit-driven service:

I'd be worried about sustainability and where we get the money from. What happens if we don't get enough funding? We'd have to close libraries

We would no longer be employed by the Council, which could mean we could lose our pension

A staff-owned mutual would mean that the service becomes about profit which isn't good

If we were a mutual it would make us have to consider income more, which would affect the service. Income targets get in the way of outreach services...we would be thinking more about our targets

The service would become more target-driven with a staff-owned mutual.

- 14.7 Further, people questioned whether staff would want to join a mutual currently given they allegedly no longer work for a service in which they have confidence:

Why would we want to invest our time in the library after being knocked down? We'd have to get our confidence back. It's not the principle I'm against; we'd be running a service that we wouldn't be comfortable in

I would be reluctant to get involved in something that isn't worth my time...I don't want to be wasting my time by running a shop front; I'm better than that

Taking over as a mutual is something you do in good weather; not when it's like this.

- 14.8 Finally with regard to mutuals, participants in both groups desired more information about how they would work in practice so they can make an informed decision as to whether it is a delivery model worthy of pursuit:

We don't know enough about staff mutuals. There are bound to be risks

We were only informed about a staff mutual last week. We don't know about mutuals in public services and how they work. We've been downloading things from the internet trying to find out how it all works and we just don't know. There's nothing specific about library services

I'd like to know a bit more about this and see what York and Suffolk have done; we should visit as a staff team.

- 14.9 As for other models, staff in both groups were firmly opposed to outsourcing to a commercial provider on the grounds of efficiency and that profit-making goes against the ethos of a library service:

Libraries are not a commercial proposition; they are about what's best for society and about contributing towards society

How can it be more efficient for a company to run the service and get a profit than running the service in-house without profit?

- 14.10 It should be noted that people's attitudes towards outsourcing seem to have been influenced by their perceptions of what has happened within other LBB departments – as well as their view of the effect such significant levels of outsourcing have had on Barnet as a Council:

The Council are constantly outsourcing and are changing terms and conditions...

We've gone from being a Council that prides itself in its services to being part of a Council that only cares about cost. I think that's mainly come out of the outsourcing.

Relocation and Redevelopment

- 14.11 Staff were not averse to the relocation and redevelopment of libraries: in fact, many were keen to see them moved to more appropriate buildings and locations nearer town centres (and their associated footfall):

The locations of the libraries were for another era. It worked in the 1930s and 1960s but not anymore. The libraries are too far away from the town centres. Perhaps they need to move

Anyone with any sense needs to look at a map and see where libraries are needed most; in the right location

If they are going to relocate and resize libraries they need to be in the right place; in the middle of things.

- 14.12 Some examples of libraries thought to be in need of relocation and redevelopment to higher density areas with better parking were Childs Hill, Church End, East Barnet, Edgware, Golders Green, Hendon, Mill Hill and North Finchley:

I'd love Edgware to move more centrally into Broadwalk; that's where people go and where all the free parking is

They need to move libraries further into the High Street; this needs to be done with Mill Hill

Brent Cross shopping centre is down the road from Hendon. It makes so much more sense to have Hendon library there; especially with the regeneration...

East Barnet, Church End, Childs Hill and North Finchley are really old; maintaining them is costing us. If we could sell them and reinvest in new buildings, that would make the savings.

Parking is a big issue in Barnet; especially for Hendon and Golders Green. They need to look at redevelopment.

Open library and unstaffed hours

- 14.13 In considering the open library system and unstaffed opening hours, staff in Group One were particularly concerned with the safety and security of library users in buildings that, it was claimed, are not suited to free, unsupervised access:

The buildings aren't appropriate for the public to be free-ranging in

You couldn't possibly just let the public in Chipping Barnet; it's a security risk and a health and safety risk. They would have to shutter off certain parts of the library

There are security issues here. If they are going to do an unstaffed library they need proper security. They aren't doing it properly; they are doing it cheaply with CCTV

At 9.30 at night I wouldn't be comfortable entering a building on my own. You never know who might be lurking behind the shelf. There's a safety issue

- 14.14 It was also suggested that homeless people may seek to take advantage of the system and view libraries as warm places to sleep – thus discouraging others from wishing to use them:

In Hendon we have quite a lot of homeless people. If these people get in then nobody else might want to

Homeless people will take advantage; they will not leave at 11...

- 14.15 Staff in Group Two had similar concerns but felt these could be mitigated against to a certain degree by the presence of a security guard:

They should have security guards at the libraries at the unmanned times

When this kind of technology is used in universities, it is done with security guards and such.

- 14.16 Furthermore, staff were of the view that they have a critical role to play in the delivery of the library service, particularly with regard to assisting vulnerable members of the community. They were very concerned that this important function would be lost during unstaffed hours – as would the ability to manage both emergency situations and inappropriate behaviour on the part of library users:

We often support vulnerable people in libraries. We help people looking for jobs. The Job Centre often sends people to the library, because you need to prove that you are looking and applying for jobs online. If we aren't here anymore where are those people going to go?

We know where to look for information in libraries; we do it every day and know how to do it

We have a lot of members of the public with mental health problems. If there's no one there it would be very difficult

Who would deal with first aid and medical emergencies if there was no staff there?

People would be watching pornography on the computers. People do it now, but we can catch them or other customers will tell us

I've seen two adults pummelling each other; who would deal with that in an unstaffed library?

There are everyday problems that need to be sorted out by staff; things like arguments and people we need to keep an eye on. If you've got a member of staff on the floor, there's a lot less chance of aggressive situations escalating.

Essentially, staff felt that: *technology should be a way of improving the service, not replacing it. We always need people and skilled people.*

- 14.17 The 'exclusive' nature of the open library system (that is, the fact certain people such as under 16s and those without a library card would be precluded from using an unstaffed library) was criticised both generally and because it 'goes against the spirit' of open access:

Some people would be excluded from the open library service: children under the age of 16 and people who don't have a library card

These open libraries go against public access a bit. We've always allowed the public into libraries whoever they are. The open libraries seem more restricted.

- 14.18 Finally in terms of open libraries, it was said that: *"we need to look at our customers: the people who would use the unstaffed libraries are the ones that use digital library services. The unemployed people, young people and families need to use the libraries during the day. There's no point in increasing the opening hours for those core groups. They aren't going to use the library at 7am".*

Income generation

- 14.19 Some staff in Group One disliked the term 'income generation' as they felt that: *"libraries are quite a socialist notion, and if people don't agree with that it's fine. However, people shouldn't be harping on about income generation"; and "we can't charge for everything or we'd be the same as Waterstones or Amazon".*

- 14.20 On a more practical note though, staff were not averse to renting out surplus library space to businesses and others – though they were cautious about how much revenue this would generate in practice (and certainly suggested that it may take some time to bear fruit):

It's not going to make significant amounts of money

It might take a few years to earn money by hiring out space; it's like any kind of business.

For this reason it was suggested that larger companies should primarily be targeted for advertising as potential customers:

If somebody could approach big companies and reach out to them about our rooms then I think it would help increase income. We need it to be advertised. There are companies that would be interested in our space, but we need to increase our profile.

- 14.21 Installing facilities such as vending machines and Amazon lockers was favoured (though again there was some feeling that this would generate insufficient income) – though developing a 'Friends of' scheme was not on the grounds that: *"it's meant to be a free service".*

- 14.22 It was also suggested that: *“they could invest in us to train us more. We could then offer professional English and ICT lessons or lessons on how to do tax returns. We could be paid from the Job Centre and other services to provide these lessons”.*

Three Proposed Options

General comments

- 14.23 All staff participants were familiar with the consultation document and the three proposed options. Therefore, both groups began with a general discussion around the proposals and the way in which the consultation had been undertaken by the Council.

- 14.24 Staff firstly questioned the reasoning behind the options and commented that they did not appear to be particularly well-argued, particularly in comparison to those put forward in other areas:

The proposals in Southampton are much more logical than the ones here in Barnet; you can see the logic behind what they want to do. The three proposals seem arbitrary...different libraries close in the different options

The Hertfordshire proposals make more sense logically too – libraries have different ‘levels’ of size and travel difference in their document. It makes sense!

- 14.25 Participants also cited an apparent lack of evidence to underpin the proposals; for instance, they felt that the idea of businesses renting library space needed further exploration and suggested that, if there was indeed interest in doing so, this should have been communicated within the consultation document:

What evidence is there that businesses are willing to rent out space?

I don’t know why they want to convert the buildings to office space; there are too many in London

They need to give more research for this option. They need to say how much they are going to rent out the rest of the buildings every year and things like that.

- 14.26 There was some confusion as to the reasoning behind the choice of library closures in Options Two and Three, with one staff member commenting that: *“In Option Two Osidge closes and East Barnet stays open, but it’s the opposite way around for Option Three. Where’s the logic?”*

- 14.27 Staff in the first group were particularly disappointed with the three proposed options: they considered them to be ‘over-the-top’ and politically- and cost-driven as opposed to an attempt to deliver a sustainable, quality service:

What Barnet is doing is so ludicrously over the top. The three options are clearly going too far

The proposals don’t seem to have any depth or purpose; it’s just purely on cost

These proposals are driven by ideology, not evidence

There is nowhere in these proposals that shows how they would improve the library service

It’s hard to see any positivity in the situation we are currently in. The consultation is deeply flawed and politically-driven

This whole thing is very political; I think it’s a way of running the service to the ground

Barnet is a Tory Council; they want to be seen as leading the way in lean public service. It's almost like a theory they are trying out. They don't care about the service.

- 14.28 Participants in this group also felt particularly aggrieved that these proposals have come at a time when the library service has not fully recovered from previous reductions to its budget – and suggested that they might be the final 'nail in the coffin' for the provision of a quality service:

In the last five or ten years it's been about making cuts to the service that nobody notices – it's been an underhand way of doing things. I think we've continued to deliver a quality service despite that. I think we are now going to end up with a poor service that doesn't set out what it's supposed to do; it's statutory

We can't physically deliver anything positive because of the constraints we are under

We have lost a lot of really excellent staff since the first restructure in 2009

The three proposals really don't allow us to continue to deliver the quality of service that we have over the years

I think the consultation is totally flawed. The net result of any of the proposals would finish the Library Service in Barnet.

Option One

- 14.29 When considering Option One, staff were particularly concerned with the proposed reduction in library space. They questioned how a library could function within a room of 540 square feet, as well as the extent to which this would be a viable and sustainable option given that the size, stock and activity reductions would inevitably lead to a decrease in the number of people visiting the smaller facilities:

Ten small libraries is a waste of time...

Nothing will work with Option One as libraries will be too small

Not much could be offered in a 540 square foot library. It would probably only have two shelves, three computers, a photocopier and a table

Children's activities are our USPs. We won't be able to do Rhyme Time in these smaller libraries; we are always overbooked for them

How are we going to fit all the computers, the children's books and the adult's books in there?

All you can provide in that size is a small collection of books. There are no other services: no Rhyme Time; no PCs; no community groups.

- 14.30 Staff also noted that some of the libraries proposed to reduce in size (Edgware, North Finchley and Golders Green) are busy facilities, which they felt proves the illogicality of the proposed change:

Places like Edgware, North Finchley and Golders Green are all busy libraries – they will all become small rooms. Why would they do that?

Edgware is considered a main library...the proposal to close it is ludicrous!

- 14.31 Thinking about the core libraries, one participant suggested that the wrong ones were chosen - and others made the point that all four would require significant investment if Option One was to be taken forward (as well as criticising the fact that there is no mention of this in the consultation document).

- 14.32 Typically, staff shared the view that: *staff are educated, so if you reduce the libraries the education of future generations will suffer, which will have an impact on the national economy. This is a short-term solution that has big long-term implications!*
- 14.33 Finally, some participants agreed with the view that: *Option One is the political option in my opinion... They just want to say that they are keeping the libraries open.*

Option Two

- 14.34 Generally, staff in Group Two preferred this option and described it as the “*lesser evil*”. That said, their support was based on maintaining current staffing levels and additional investment in the remaining libraries:

I would rather see fewer libraries of better quality than many libraries of lower quality. You may be able to amalgamate some libraries. There need to be more outreach services for the areas where libraries are taken away. Fewer libraries with better facilities are better; I would rather six or seven libraries like that

They should amalgamate some libraries and keep the same amount of staff. Less libraries of better quality is better

It would be good if more was invested into the remaining libraries; there should be more staff and better technology. They should make super libraries.

- 14.35 Participants were willing to accept some library closures, although they did not agree with those earmarked for closure, suggesting that:

The richer area libraries are chosen to stay open, and the poorer ones are closing. They'll get less opposition with these closures

I want to know how they chose those libraries. It seems purely political to me. It doesn't make sense geographically. Those are all rich areas

I agree with the principle of having four improved libraries, but they need to choose different ones

The principle of Option Two is good but they need to rethink it. Some libraries need to be closed.

- 14.36 Based upon these discussions, staff in Group Two were asked for their views on which libraries should close. Firstly, they rejected the proposal that Hendon Library should be a core facility and suggested that it should either close, relocate or become part of Middlesex University:

Everything is dying out in Hendon; it needs to be relocated to somewhere smaller

We should sell Hendon Library to Middlesex University for a tonne of money; they are gagging to get their hands on it. Staff should be relocated elsewhere

Hendon has been dying on its feet for five years. Why are we keeping it as a core library?

- 14.37 All staff agreed that Mill Hill Library should close because it is *too close to the other libraries*. Similarly, they felt that Childs Hill and South Friern Libraries should also close on the grounds of low activity (though one person disagreed with the latter).
- 14.38 It was said that Golders Green Library should remain because it is a well-used library; however, participants felt the building should be improved or relocated. Retaining Burnt Oak was also a priority

due to the need for a library in its area – but also because it is a good example of how library provision should be delivered throughout the borough:

Burnt Oak should be a template: it's the minimum acceptable size and it's on the High Street. It shouldn't be closing; it's the best example we have.

- 14.39 While staff in Group Two declined to mention specific libraries, they too agreed that some of Barnet's libraries could be closed insofar as they are no longer fit for purpose. However, they also acknowledged the attachment felt for these facilities within communities and suggested that it is and will be a 'hard sell' to persuade residents that closures may be required:

I feel that some libraries need to be closed, because they are not fit for purpose. It's almost impossible because people get attached the buildings because they went there as children. Our needs have moved on and the customer's needs have moved on. You can't get anything from holding onto a site for nostalgia value

There is a large emotional attachment to these buildings that are no longer fit for purpose

People grow attached to buildings. It needs to be made more explicit that libraries are going to move to more appropriate locations.

Option Three

- 14.40 Staff in both groups were strongly opposed to Option Three: they felt that, while volunteers can help support the service, they do not have the necessary skills (or indeed the requisite reliability) to manage it:

Some volunteers are very good, but we only use them for a few roles at the moment. Trying to run a large number of volunteers and provide any form of comprehensive service is an enormous undertaking

Volunteering is okay in addition to normal staffing, but you can't rely on them to run the service. It's quite a lengthy process to employ a volunteer. Sometimes they will only turn up once or twice if they get another job

Volunteers are unreliable. We have a young girl at the moment who doesn't always turn up and won't ring us if she isn't... If I'm relying on her to do something it won't get done

Volunteers can't provide the quality of service that we supply. You can't rely on them. You will have to cancel sessions, which will get rid of quality for the customer. With us there's always someone to cover.

- 14.41 Importantly, staff feared that community libraries would not be part of the library network, and would thus not be able to deliver the same level of service. As one member of staff in Group Two explained: "those volunteer libraries wouldn't be libraries; they'd be second hand book borrowing. It's not a library service".

- 14.42 Staff also questioned the sustainability of a community-run library given that the initial level of enthusiasm from volunteers may wane – and worried about who would take responsibility in the event that things went wrong:

There might be a burst of enthusiasm when the community libraries first open, but eventually the enthusiasm is going to run down and they are going to struggle to find people...

- 14.43 Staff referred to the Borough's two community libraries: Hampstead Garden Suburb and Friern Barnet. They felt that: "*Garden Suburb is working is because it's an incredibly affluent neighbourhood, with rich elderly people that are willing to sit behind the counter and do their bit for the community*". On this basis, it was suggested that community libraries have more chance of success in affluent areas and that:

This model is just not going to work in Graham Park; forget it, it's not going to work.

- 14.44 Staff in Group One also used the example of the Friern Barnet Library to illustrate why community-run libraries are not typically successful: all agreed with the view that it "*has become a weird glorified jumble sale*". They also questioned why LBB offered the community a grant to run this service when the money could have been given to the 'professional' library service:

If they've got that money, why can't they give us that money? We've proven that we can run a proper, efficient and professional service of very high standard. Those people have been given money to run the service with no track record and no health and safety training...

- 14.45 The general consensus on Option Three was that: "*volunteers can't replicate our experience no matter what their background is. We're constantly being trained to keep up with things. Volunteers don't understand what a contemporary library is*".

Alternatives?

- 14.46 When asked about alternatives to LBB's proposals, the idea of a community hub and/or co-location with a commercial enterprise was supported by the majority of staff. Some typical comments included:

Co-locating is viable for generating income

It makes total sense to relocate with arts depots and leisure centres...

It would be good to have the library located with a leisure centre. The health message and information available in the library go well together

They could relocate in shop-type premises; perhaps having a door between a coffee shop and a library. That kind of co-location would work. Coffee shops and libraries go hand in hand. But they need to be in the right places

I don't have a problem with co-location as long as it works. It needs to be somewhere where the public can access it. Libraries need to be on high streets

You need to relocate into a company that's already been established. It would be mutually beneficial.

- 14.47 Staff were also strongly in favour of greater collaboration and resource-sharing with neighbouring boroughs to deliver efficiencies and establish appropriate ways of offering a cross-boundary library service to residents:

We should consult our neighbouring boroughs, which we never do...we are not talking to each other at all

We are all strapped for cash; maybe we should start thinking about sharing resources. Maybe if we do keep Burnt Oak open, Harrow could close their library and help fund Burnt Oak and send people there - or vice versa

We should look at sharing services with Haringey; we need to think about amalgamating

We need to talk to Haringey about geography as some of our libraries are quite close. We could possibly share services

Indeed, one participant went so far as to suggest: *“one library service for London. With the size of the cuts, that option is starting to make more sense”*.

- 14.48 One final suggestion was for LBB to: *“look at its real estate and sell off the land we own for full price to fund the redevelopment of the existing network of libraries”*.

Other Issues – Consultation Process

- 14.49 Staff raised concerns about the consultation document and associated questionnaire: they alleged that many people had not completed the latter, not because they were uninterested in the future of the library service, but because it is unnecessarily lengthy and complex:

Which teenager is going to read through the whole document? Fair enough answering five questions on each page, but who is going to ingest all this information to answer a questionnaire?

We’ve had people at the library that say they haven’t got time to do the questionnaire when they see how long it is

The only people that will complete the questionnaire are the people that have a vested interest in it.

- 14.50 Participants also raised concerns about the construction of the questionnaire which, in their view, is ‘loaded’, ‘disingenuous’ and ‘ambiguous’:

In terms of gathering data, I’ve seen that the questionnaire is a bit disingenuous, saying things like “do you want your library to be open for longer hours?”

The questionnaire is very loaded; they don’t give the whole picture

Some questions are ambiguous. There is one question that essentially asks “do you want a financially-viable service or do you want to protect the vulnerable?” What does it imply?

- 14.51 As one member of staff stated: *“if you really want to know what people think, you have to make it as easy and obvious as possible”* - and there was a strong sense that this had not been achieved.

15. Interviews with Home Library Service Users

Introduction

- 15.1 Ten depth telephone interviews, each lasting around 20-30 minutes, were undertaken with users of LBB's home library service. Participants were initially recruited by LBB staff, who then passed their details to ORS: 15 participants were contacted, with 10 interviews achieved with those available during the consultation period.
- 15.2 The interviews focused on: people's views on the home and mobile library services and any improvements they desire to them; usage of library buildings and the factors that encourage and discourage this; and the consultation proposals and options. The findings from the discussions are reported below.

Usage of (and views on) the home library service

- 15.3 Interviewees explained that they are no longer able to visit library buildings because they have mobility issues and are generally housebound. Some of the many typical comments were:

I used to use my local library until my legs played up

I'm housebound, so I don't use any of Barnet's library buildings.

- 15.4 All ten interviewees reflected both positively and passionately about the home library service; they typically used the terms *rely on* and *lifesaver* to describe the service. The quotations below are illustrative of what the service means to users:

If it wasn't for the home library I would be lost. We really rely on it when we can't get to the library ourselves

If they got rid of the home library we would be lost... The home library is a lifeline if you can't get out

The mobile library service is absolutely vital for me because I can't get out at all without an escort.

- 15.5 Some users considered the mobile service to be better than the library service because *they go that extra mile*. Indeed, the staff were said to be excellent and very helpful. Again, some of the many typical comments were:

It's an excellent service and the staff are absolutely fantastic

I couldn't wish for better men to deliver the books to me

The staff are very helpful about fulfilling my requests and they are very helpful; I like the staff.

- 15.6 The majority considered the variety and the accessibility of the home library stock to be excellent:

The home library service gets me what I ask for and they also manage to get me large print, which is very useful

The home library is a regular service and it never lets me down. They are always on the ball

They have a list now of the kind of books I like and they bring them along. The stock that they bring is absolutely okay for me

The mobile library service is very good. I give them a list of books I want and it is very helpful. They leave me ten books.

- 15.7 A few users explained that they inform the mobile service of the type of book genre in which they are interested and the service will then choose the books based on this initial information. This appears to work well:

Each time they come I give them a list of my suggestions and they bring me books that I want to read. It's excellent

They are very good with the books. I told them initially what books I liked and they try to accommodate me – they are very good.

- 15.8 Users also appreciate the regularity of the service. As one user explained: *not only do they come regularly on time, but they bring me 12 books every four weeks!*

- 15.9 A very small minority of users considered the range of books to be limited, with one explaining that: *the range of books in the home library is not always satisfactory. I told them I was interested in gardening and they gave me a picture book of gardening which took about three minutes to read through!*

- 15.10 Interviewees suggested that, by signing up to the home library service, they had lost their entitlement to visit library buildings. Some explained that, as they are unable to visit the library, this does not affect them. The users who continue to visit libraries explained that they usually get around this by using a family member's card:

I don't use the building library service, because when you use the home library service you have to give up your library ticket. They won't let me use the normal libraries. I can see the reasoning though: if you use the home library service, it's because you aren't fit to go to the library. I get around this by getting books from my daughter on her ticket.

- 15.11 Another user said that library staff have been helpful in finding a way around this issue and described how: *when I went to the library they let me take a book on physics anyway. She said I could return it when the home library visited me.*

- 15.12 Although the majority of users no longer visit libraries, when asked for what they valued most about the library service, the majority considered the library 'environment' to be extremely important:

Libraries aren't just good for renting out books...the study space for the youngsters is very important as well. The teenagers need a quiet place to study for their exams – the libraries give them that. They can't study at their homes, because there's no room

Libraries nowadays have facilities for children under school age to come with their mothers – I think it's very good. It means that the mums can come out to attractive surroundings and everyone is having a good time. It would be very sad if that was to be lost. I have a special interest in this

because I’ve got grandchildren and great grandchildren that can use it. I’m against any closures of libraries.

- 15.13 When asked about the principle of maintaining the home library service, users were typically positive and relieved by this element of the proposals. Indeed, this service was generally considered vitally important, with most explaining how it would negatively affected them if it was no longer offered. Some of the many typical comments were:

I think the home library service is fantastic. I am 88 and for me it’s a lifeline. I read a lot and I am no longer mobile and I am very restricted. I love reading, and I really don’t know what I would do without the books

Books are vital for me, because it is an escape from life. I have always loved reading. I am completely housebound, so it’s my only form of entertainment.

- 15.14 Participants were asked whether they could suggest any improvements to the home library service. The majority could not suggest any and reaffirmed their positive assessments of the service:

There is no way they could improve the home library service. I think it’s very good indeed

I personally can’t find anything that needs improving for the home library service

In my eyes there is no way the mobile library service could be improved.

- 15.15 Only one participant suggested a possible change and explained: *the home library service could be improved by providing more books for the month - I only get 12 at the moment. They said that they couldn’t get more because the box wasn’t big enough.*

Views on the common features of the three options

- 15.16 Information relating to the principles behind the three options were presented to interviewees prior to discussing the options themselves.

Income Generation

Hiring out facilities

- 15.17 When asked about the principle of hiring out library facilities (space and parking spaces at Chipping Barnet) most interviewees were typically positive, describing the idea as sensible. A minority were sceptical and felt that people may not wish to hire out space on a regular basis which could potentially cause issues in terms of revenue sustainability.

Charging for overdue books

- 15.18 The majority of interviewees considered it perfectly reasonable to introduce higher charges for overdue books. Some typical comments were:

I think it’s possible for them to charge more for late books as an idea to save money. They could increase it by a small amount

People keep the books that they rent out from the libraries and nothing ever happens. They need to enforce a charge when books are lost.

- 15.19 One interviewee also raised the issue of borrowing e-books and felt that it would not be unreasonable to charge for these – if it is a small amount.

Supporter scheme

- 15.20 The majority of interviewees would be happy to subscribe to a ‘Supporter Scheme’. An amount cited by some of the users was £10 per annum. A minority disagreed and feel they would not be willing to make such a contribution given that they only use the service to borrow books.

‘Open’ Library

- 15.21 Interviewees typically disapproved of unstaffed opening hours for safety reasons. The majority felt that libraries and the stock would be prone to vandalism, theft and misuse by ‘unruly’ members of the community (particularly teenagers). Some of the many typical comments were:

I don’t like the idea of an unstaffed library. It’s an awful world we live in, and I wouldn’t want any books to disappear unnecessarily. There would be no protection for the books

I think books would miraculously disappear in this option...books would get stolen. Even if you walked out with the book and the alarm went off you can still keep on walking

I am against unstaffed libraries. It would be abused I’m sure. There might be vandalism. Also, the place wouldn’t be kept tidy – people would leave chairs and books around. It just wouldn’t work

There are always odd people about who vandalise things – they have to be staff around of some sort just to keep an eye on things.

- 15.22 The presence of staff or at the very least a security guard is seen as vitally important to ensure the safety of users and the security of books, equipment and library buildings:

There might be a case of cutting down on the staff for issuing books, but every library should have a custodian or security guard at all times

I don’t think CCTV is enough if there was an incident. There should be a physical presence there to deal with it on the spot.

- 15.23 In addition, interviewees complimented the role of the library staff and described how they provide a vital role in delivering a good quality library. A couple of interviewees also stressed the fact that many users of the library need help and assistance to use, say, computers and that an automated approach can sometimes act as a barrier for people:

I’m a bit of a Luddite when it comes to computers. I don’t think you should replace library staff with technology. Libraries need a personal touch

I would prefer it to be a person rather than an automated approach... You need people to answer your queries. I don’t want the staff to be taken away

A lot of people don’t know how to get on the internet. They should have at least one staff member to help.

Alternative delivery models

- 15.24 Retaining the Council’s role in delivering the library service was considered vital. Some typical comments were:

I think the Council should run the libraries. I think they are trying to get out of their responsibility, especially if they are trying to share with another Council. Barnet Council started off running the libraries, so they should continue

I would prefer the Council to run the local libraries because they are elected – it’s fairer. Because the libraries are for public used they ought to be run by people the public have elected. Opening times, library locations and things like that need to be managed by the Council

The libraries are being run by the Council. If something works, why change it?

- 15.25 The majority were certainly against the idea of the library service being ‘outsourced’ and felt that this approach would not necessarily save money, particularly based upon what they know of other outsourced areas:

I don’t want things run by a company, because they don’t run things as efficiently. I don’t see why it could be changed. You are never going to know good the companies are going to be. It hasn’t always turned out to be a good idea in other organisations

The Council always says it is going to be cheaper if they outsource, but it never is – it always ends up being more expensive for them.

- 15.26 When asked what they thought of the idea of developing a staff-owned mutual, the majority supported the idea because they value librarians’ skills:

I think it would a staff owned mutual would be a possible idea, because I trust the library staff – they are very nice and very helpful

I like the idea of the staff owning the libraries, because it keeps that personal touch, and the staff would have an interest in keeping people there.

- 15.27 However, although the majority felt librarians should have a greater role in decision-making, some interviewees did not feel that the Council should relinquish its management role:

What if the staff ran libraries and they didn’t agree? I think the Council needs to be in charge

I think you would still need someone behind the staff to guide them. They need big brother to guide them.

Three options

Option One

- 15.28 Around half of the interviewees were critical of the potential reduction in size of ten libraries, which they felt would be too small to provide a functioning library service. They questioned how sustainable this would be given that the reduction in size, stock and activities would lead to a decrease in the amount of people visiting the library.

- 15.29 On the other hand, some considered it entirely reasonable to reduce the size of libraries, particularly because the space could be used to generate income. Some typical comments were:

It’s not unreasonable for the libraries to be reduced in size. Part of them could be rented out to get income

I don’t have any objection to the libraries being smaller, because people do have other alternatives these days. This is a good way to save money. They can still order in the books

- 15.30 Furthermore, some also said they would prefer this option because all libraries would remain open.

Option Two

- ^{15.31} Most interviewees did not support Option Two, primarily due to the loss of libraries and the effect this would have on those who are less able to travel a greater distance to the larger ones. Some typical comments were:

I think it would be a great pity to close the libraries. Closing libraries would cut down the number of mums who take their children into the libraries to look around. I don't think that they would take the time to go to a larger library further away.

I think it would be regrettable if libraries were to close down. It's very difficult to get a pram on a bus

I think it would be a shame to close the smaller libraries, because some people can't get to the large ones. My friend can't drive anymore so she couldn't walk any further than her local library. She wouldn't be able to get to Golders Green.

Option Three

- ^{15.32} Some interviewees felt there is a place for volunteers to support the library service and one person supported this option because fewer libraries would close. That said, the majority had concerns around the use of volunteers: some were not wholly convinced that they could find the 'right' volunteers with the necessary skills and knowledge; and others noted that it may be difficult to recruit people who would be willing to volunteer on a regular basis (and that, although they may be enthusiastic to begin with, this enthusiasm may wane).
- ^{15.33} Overall, interviewees were happy to endorse the use of volunteers, but only on the proviso that they are overseen by employed staff to train and manage them:

They could have volunteers as support and could have librarians to oversee it

If volunteers were going to run libraries there would always have to be a professional on the premises. You could have volunteers to help, but there must be a professional in charge.

16. London Borough of Barnet Meetings

Introduction

16.1 LBB also facilitated the following 14 meetings between December 2014 and February 2015.

Figure 87: LBB-run meetings

GROUP	TIME AND DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Physical and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board	3/12/14	Five attendees – three user representatives (one with visual impairment, one with hearing loss and one with visual impairment and hearing difficulties), one carer representative and the co-chair
Learning Disabilities Partnership Board	9/12/14	25-30 attendees (mix of user representatives, carers and organisations)
Carers Strategy Partnership Board	10/12/14	Seven attendees – Mencap, Barnet Carers Centre, co-chair and carer representatives
Barnet Centre for Independent Living	18/12/14	12 attendees (some overlap with the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board - three or four people were at both)
Youth Board	8/1/15	Seven attendees (one UK Youth Parliament and six Youth Board members)
Seniors’ Assembly	19/01/15	c.20 attendees, including a campaigner for Save Barnet Libraries.
Learning Disabilities Network	20/01/15	10 attendees (all representatives of organisations working with people with learning disabilities)
Older Adults Partnership Board	22/01/15	15-20 attendees, including: several user representatives; representatives from Barnet Seniors Assembly, CCG, Age UK, Ageing Well and Healthwatch Barnet and Cllrs Rutter and Cornelius
Mental Health Partnership Board	04/02/15	15 practitioners plus the Council, Public Health, six service users and one Carer

UK Youth Parliament	9/2/15	Two attendees
Role Model Army	12/02/15	Four attendees

Figure 88: Follow-up Engagement Meetings

GROUP	TIME AND DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Grahame Park Independent Living (over 55's)	16/2/15	25 attendees
Wingfield Children’s Centre drop-in*	17/2/15	Five attendees
The Hyde Children’s Centre drop-in*	19/2/15	Seven attendees

- 16.2 Detailed notes were taken to capture participants’ views, and these have been themed and summarised.

Main Findings

The Value of Libraries

- 16.3 Many comments were made in support of libraries generally, which were described as important community assets or ‘hubs’ for all residents that offer a wide range of services and are essential for fostering education and culture:

They are important community establishments that need to be preserved (Hyde Children’s Centre Drop-in)

Libraries are enormously important as community assets, for people of all ages but in particular for the young and the old (Older Adults’ Partnership Board)

The library is more than a place to read and borrow books, but a community hub. The library provides a place to interact, do activities and feel part of the community, which is especially important as other community centres have closed (Barnet Centre for Independent Living)

Libraries are important because of the range of different services they offer. Libraries are not just about borrowing books, but places to find information, social spaces (Carers Strategy Partnership Board)

Libraries play an important role in education and culture and in helping people ‘get where they are’. (Older Adults’ Partnership Board)

- 16.4 The important role of libraries in encouraging social mobility was emphasised at the Barnet Centre for Independent Living (BCIL) session, where it was said that they are of notable value to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. For this reason it was said that their number should increase not decrease.
- 16.5 At the BCIL session it was again said that the role of libraries cannot be taken in isolation and that they must be considered in terms of the important contribution they make (in terms of learning opportunities and wellbeing) to other services such as education and health:

If the Government says it wants to support education, why does it not support libraries...librarians are teachers and helpers in the community so why is the Council not supporting them? (Barnet Centre for Independent Living)

They were also described in this session as being somewhat uniquely seen as neutral, trusted spaces for people. This, it was felt, should have been included in the impact assessment.

- 16.6 Libraries were seen as hubs for information and advice and for promoting community activity (though it was said at the Carers Strategy Partnership Board that they could do more to enhance community networks). Indeed, the Grahame Park Independent Living Group described them as ‘gateways to other groups’ insofar as it was through the library that some members found out about said group. Furthermore, the fact that they provide meeting space for, among others, older persons’ groups, BCIL the Job Centre and Citizens’ Advice Bureau was considered vital:

They provide meeting space for older adults groups (Older Adults’ Partnership Board)

There’s the wider public services offered through libraries...BCIL, Jobseekers, Citizens Advice (Older Adults’ Partnership Board)

BCIL engage with their members and the community through libraries by using meeting rooms. (Barnet Centre for Independent Living)

- 16.7 One participant at the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board group was particularly critical of the fact that while organisations like Mencap are trying to use libraries to provide information and support, the library service is being cut. They essentially complained of what they saw as contradictory messages from the Council. They made specific reference to a previous Learning Disabilities Partnership Board whereby people had been asked for their views on how libraries could be better used to provide other services for the community – and expressed concern that this would no longer be possible under the current proposals.
- 16.8 In terms of particular groups, there was a sense that libraries offer independence to people with Physical and Sensory Impairment (PSI). One carer representative at the PSI Partnership Board meeting explained that their husband (who is registered blind) can travel to his local library easily by bus and that the library staff knew him and his particular needs. Indeed, the carer also described how her husband was able to take his children to a storytelling activity at a library himself, primarily because the staff knew him personally and were able to assist. The library was described as his ‘lifeline’
- 16.9 The importance of libraries as a place of respite for carers was also emphasised at the Carers Strategy Partnership Board – as was their typically convenient location near to other amenities which enables carers to accomplish several tasks in a single journey:

The library being a safe place, with staff, where we can leave the person we care for for a short amount of time to do other things is important (Carers Strategy Partnership Board)

Having libraries near to other places (e.g. coffee shops and shops) allows us to do a number of things in a single journey. (Carers Strategy Partnership Board)

Common features of all three options

Open Library

- 16.10 Extending opening hours via the open library concept received some support at the BCIL, Role Model Army, Grahame Park Independent Living Group and the Hyde and Wingfield Children’s Centre Drop-ins

– though there were also questions around how it would work in practice, especially in relation to safety and security:

Certain things would need to be thought about in more detail, for example it works in university libraries with an identifiable community but how would it work in a public library? I have concerns about security and crime risks. (Hyde Children's Centre Drop-in)

^{16.11} Indeed, those who opposed the idea of an open library did so primarily on safety, (including health and safety), security and safeguarding grounds, as the following comments demonstrate – though the BCIL group suggested that people's fears could be allayed to a degree with the use of volunteers during unstaffed opening hours. Some of the many typical comments were:

Extending hours could work but I'm worried about the lack of staff. What about security and protection? (Wingfield Children's Centre Drop-in)

I'm concerned about the open library because of security, especially on the estate...libraries should never be unmanned (Wingfield Children's Centre)

Scandinavia and Barnet are very different...there's the potential for crime in unstaffed libraries and CCTV is inadequate protection (Barnet Seniors' Assembly)

What would happen in the event of an emergency? In unstaffed hours people would not be protected or looked after by the library unit (Barnet Seniors' Assembly)

I'd be concerned around security and safety in unstaffed Library buildings (Barnet Youth Board)

I want to know more about the safety precautions that would be in place in unstaffed hours (Mental Health Partnership Board)

I'm concerned about the safety of unstaffed libraries, in particular the lack of a dedicated first aider (Mental Health Partnership Board)

What would happen if you fell down in a library without staff there to help? (Learning Disabilities Partnership Board)

Having the open library system as an open door (as opposed to a turnstile) with the potential for tailgating is a concern. People with learning disabilities might be particularly vulnerable to targeted attempts to tailgate into the library (Learning Disabilities Network)

Would the responsibility for room set up (involving the potentially dangerous moving of shelves, tables, chairs etc.) lie with the groups who use the library space in unstaffed hours. What about liability re health and safety risks? (Learning Disabilities Partnership Board)

I question the amount of trust placed in the public for this scheme. (Barnet Youth Board)

^{16.12} Participants at several sessions also felt that people might be discouraged from using libraries during unstaffed hours due to the lack of available assistance from staff members:

Staff give atmosphere to the library and in unstaffed times there would not be anyone available to help with IT (BCIL)

Libraries are social places for social activity...it gets me out of the house. The idea of going to a library without staff is at odds with this (Physical and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board)

ome people would be put off by staff not being there; there could be possible difficulties using the self-service and computers (Wingfield Children's Centre)

I would not want to visit a library without staff present...staff are welcoming and helpful and I oppose reductions in staffed hours. (Older Adults’ Partnership Board)

16.13 The PSI Board was concerned about children and young people being prevented from using libraries during unstaffed hours: one person noted that their daughter (aged 17) had been using the library unaccompanied since the age of 12 - and they considered it unfair that this would not be possible for others her age in future. Furthermore, both members of the Youth Parliament group saw the age restriction of 16 as too high. One suggested that young people of secondary school age should be able to use the open library unaccompanied and the other felt the lower limit should be set at Year 10 (GCSE age).

16.14 Having such facilities available for studying outside of the home was noted as being particularly important to young carers, offering them a safe place to “*get away from being a carer*”. The Carers Strategy Partnership Board suggested that young carers most need access to a library on weekends insofar as: “*they find respite at school but at the weekends libraries are valued as places they can go away from the home*”.

16.15 In terms of mitigating against the above issues, the PSI Partnership Board and a participant at the Wingfield Children’s Centre drop-in recommended that LBB take account of peak times for young people (roughly 4:00pm to 8:00pm on weekday evenings and all day on weekends) when considering staffed and unstaffed opening hours. Indeed, several young people at the Barnet Youth Board and Youth Parliament spoke of the need for longer opening hours for young people more generally – and while it was acknowledged that this could be achieved via the open library system, this would only be the case for over 16s under the current proposal:

I know young people who would want to work in libraries until around 9pm (Youth Parliament)

A library closing at 5pm is no good when you leave school at 4pm. Opening Libraries until, for example, 11pm at night would be a good idea but there would need to be staff. During school holidays libraries should be open as long as possible (Barnet Youth Board)

The swipe card system should keep libraries open until 11pm and staff should be in libraries until 8 or 9pm to enable young people to use libraries after school or college. (Barnet Youth Board)

16.16 That use of the open library would be difficult for people with learning disabilities or a physical and/or sensory impairment was noted at the PSI Partnership Board and the Learning Disabilities Network groups. With regard to the former, particular concerns were raised around doing the following without staff assistance: moving around within library buildings; negotiating stairs at particular libraries like Chipping Barnet; logging into computer systems; and (for wheelchair users) moving to a chair at a computer desk. Indeed, one carer representative at the PSI Partnership Board described the important relationships that people with a PSI develop with library staff in the context of their spouse’s experience:

My husband is registered blind and knows the staff personally. He recognises their voices and has built up trust and a rapport with them. (PSI Partnership Board)

16.17 Further, the Carers Strategy Partnership Board mentioned that the process of accessing the building (via chip and pin) needed to be accessible for people with disabilities - for example by providing a large screen with audio functions.

16.18 For a person with learning disabilities, concerns were around: remembering PIN numbers; and successfully checking out books without assistance from staff or a carer. However, it was also said that some people with learning disabilities, given the right training, would be able to use an unstaffed library - and that there would need to be very good rolling training programmes in place, from both the Council and learning disabilities support organisations, to make this happen.

16.19 Given the above issues, one member of the PSI Partnership Board was in favour of using volunteers during unstaffed times to mitigate the impact of not having library staff present. However, another participant was concerned that volunteers lacked the skills and experience of library staff and would not be able to provide the same level of support. There was consensus that, if volunteers were to be present during unstaffed hours, they would need PSI training.

16.20 Further, an appointment system was suggested for vulnerable people and people with PSI who wish to attend a library during staffed times:

People could request and book a time to visit the library when staff would be there (PSI Partnership Board)

16.21 The Learning Disabilities Network requested more information about the telephone support and advice line proposed for unstaffed hours. One person proposed that, instead of having to dial, the phone should ring automatically when picked up - and another suggestion was for a video screen demonstrating the process of FAQs. The suggestion of symbols for people with learning disabilities to navigate around the library was also welcomed.

16.22 One further issue raised by the Learning Disabilities Network was that the chip and pin library entry system should extend to carers and accompanying friends or family members of people with learning disabilities – perhaps via the ability to pre-register a ‘guest’ on a user’s card:

Would the accompanying adult need to be a library member or could this be made more flexible in the case of people with specific needs? People who need extra assistance from a carer or accompanying adult could have a guest pre-registered on their card. (Learning Disabilities Network)

It was also said that: *“if carers did need to register for open plus this would need to be well communicated by the Council”*.

16.23 In terms of what opening hours would best suit the needs of those with learning disabilities, discussions at the Learning Disabilities Network centred around the ‘traditional’ nature of their services - that is, daytime opening. Staffed opening of libraries, it was felt, would need to reflect this by being available around lunchtime.

16.24 Looking at opening hours more generally, there was a sense in several groups that these should vary seasonally - for example with more staffed hours provided in, say, the school holidays and during examination periods:

Staffed opening hours would need to be longer in school holidays and exam periods (Barnet Youth Board)

It is important that unstaffed hours are varied between term time and school holidays. There need to be more staffed hours during half terms and exam periods...especially during the day with parents at work and unable to accompany children to libraries (Youth Parliament)

Opening hours need to be varied seasonally as well as across days and times. For example more staff capacity is needed around exam times when more young people are using libraries for studying. (PSI Partnership Board)

- ^{16.25} Finally, a participant at the Mental Health Partnership Board meeting questioned whether the additional costs involved in installing and maintaining the open library system (including surveillance and monitoring) would offset the savings made through reduced staff opening. They were sceptical that this would be the case and particularly desired more information about the cost of insurance premiums.

Income generation

- ^{16.26} The following means of income generation were recommended by participants across a range of meetings:

Room/space rental - for example to business start-ups

Rent rooms or free space in library buildings to social enterprise projects and business start-ups (Voice of the Child Co-ordinator)

Other options need to be considered, for example renting space for business start-ups (Older Adults' Partnership Board)

With initial investment to enhance these spaces, libraries could charge more for room hire and have the potential to hire them out for parties and bigger events (Youth Parliament)

Cafés in libraries

If libraries offered 'coffee and cake' they would be well used (Grahame Park Independent Living Group)

The freed up space in smaller libraries could be turned into a café (Hyde Children's Centre Drop-in)

Other options need to be considered such as cafés in libraries (Older Adults' Partnership Board)

Charging for new and existing activities and events such as book signings, live music events, courses, exhibitions and children's Rhyme Time

Charge for events such as seeing an author; but young people would only be willing to pay around £1 for this (Youth Parliament)

Charge for higher profile events in larger libraries: live music, gigs etc. (Voice of the Child Co-ordinator)

Offering courses at libraries like sign language course (Role Model Army)

Barnet libraries could hold exhibitions. There's a potential for income generation by charging exhibitors for use of space. Swiss Cottage Library does this (Grahame Park Independent Living Group)

Charge for young children's groups like Rhyme Time...parents and carers would be willing to pay a couple of pounds for these (Grahame Park Independent Living Group)

Commercial sponsorship

North Finchley Library could be sponsored by the Sainsbury’s nearby (Older Adults’ Partnership Board)

- 16.27 The potential for a ‘Friends of’ scheme was only discussed by the Role Model Army participants, who suggested that: *“for [it] to work there would need to be good ideas for the extra services offered to subscribers”*.
- 16.28 A member of the Carers Strategy Partnership Board noted the shortage of parking currently at certain libraries and thus questioned the feasibility of hiring out parking spaces.

Relocation and redevelopment

- 16.29 There was some disagreement about the need for relocating and/or redeveloping libraries at the Barnet Youth Board meeting. Though it was said that the whole look of libraries should be updated to make them appeal to young people, there was some sense that what happens within them is more important than the building itself. Modernising libraries was not thought to be needed as long as the buildings offer safe, comfortable spaces to study. (Role Model Army)

Alternative delivery models

- 16.30 There was recognition at the Barnet Youth Board meeting that schools and libraries could work closer together by means of, say, study groups running in the latter.
- 16.31 One person at the Mental Health Partnership Board suggested that there might be a possibility to partner with Edgware Community Hospital Library; or to open up Edgware Community Hospital Library to the public.
- 16.32 The UK Youth Parliament participants were of the view that it matters little who runs the library service providing they are ‘professional’, but they did desire clarification as to how the Council would divest itself of the service in practice:

*As long as the people running [them] are professional, it would not matter who run libraries
How would this work in practice in terms of staff transfer, accountability of new provider.*

The proposed options

Option One

- 16.33 Both young people at the Youth Parliament session preferred Option One as this would keep all libraries open - though they thought the exact size of the 10 smaller libraries needed to be determined by looking at usage (numbers and type of user) closely. Closing six libraries - as under Option Two - was seen as too radical. (Youth Parliament)
- 16.34 In many of the other sessions though, there was significant concern about the proposed reduction in size of 10 libraries to 540 square feet, which was considered too small to house a modern library and all its associated activities:

*540 square feet is as an unrealistic size for libraries (Older Adults’ Partnership Board)
A large library is stimulating, whereas a smaller library would be limiting in the choice of books and in the number of people who were able to use it (Barnet Centre for Independent Living)*

This would not meet young people's study needs (Barnet Youth Board)

How would the activities that currently take place in libraries (for example reading, coffee mornings) be able to take place in small libraries; how many children and adults would fit in for example? (Barnet Seniors' Assembly)

How can you have a library and offer community services in a room of 540 square feet (Role Model Army)

Reducing Hendon Library in size would not be popular among the many students who use the library. (Hyde Children's Centre Drop-in)

Indeed, there was a sense that *'reducing the size of libraries would mean decreased usage and that that would be used to justify library closures in the future'*. (Barnet Seniors' Assembly)

16.35 It was also suggested that: *'small libraries would put young people off using libraries and restrict usage to core library functions like book borrowing which attracts mostly older people'*. (Role Model Army)

16.36 Smaller libraries for people with limited mobility was a concern at the BCIL session: there were doubts about how wheelchair access (for example for disabled toilets and within the library building itself) would work in a smaller space.

Option Two

16.37 Option Two was favoured by the Barnet Youth Board, whose participants suggested that having lots of small libraries in close proximity (Option One) is *'not the best use of resources'*. The young people said they would prefer to have *'fewer but better, more modern libraries that have been invested in and improved'*:

It's important to have larger spaces open for longer periods of time and making the more popular Libraries bigger and better would make more sense. (Barnet Youth Board)

This is especially important given that the purpose of Libraries for young people is apparently changing, with ample study space and good quality Wi-Fi facilities important.

16.38 Other young people (at the Role Model Army session) could also see the merits of Option Two, though there were concerns about closing six libraries. Indeed, one participant said that: *"keeping the eight largest and busiest libraries open might not be the best for all library users because sometimes convenience is better than size/business"*.

16.39 Though the Barnet Youth Board considered a 30-minute travel time to be reasonable (and in fact commented that journey convenience may be a better measure than time given that people would be more willing to undertake a direct longer journey than a shorter journey with multiple transport links), there was significant worry in some groups that it would be prohibitive and would prevent many residents from using an alternative library in future should their local one close:

30 minutes travel time, especially by bus, is too long to travel to a library (Older Adults' Partnership Board)

Being within walking distance or a short bus journey away from a library is much easier. Public transport in Barnet is poor, which would make travelling to a library more difficult (Barnet Seniors' Assembly)

I can walk to my library [East Barnet] at the moment, meaning I can leave my husband for 30 minutes. This would no longer be possible if the library moved or closed (Carers Strategy Partnership Board)

- 16.40 When asked for their views on library closures, the two Youth Parliament members said it should depend on usage. They argued that the number and type of people using the library is important; that is, if a library used heavily by young people is closed they could find alternatives (such as study rooms in youth centres), but if a facility is used mostly by older people, they might be less able to travel to a different place. (Youth Parliament)
- 16.41 The fact that Barnet has a large and growing population was a source of concern for participants at the BCIL meeting. They considered that *the borough's growing population and cuts to libraries are contradictory...* (BCIL)
- 16.42 One other issue of concern around Option Two was that closures have the potential to be very disruptive to people with learning disabilities (BCIL) - though one person at the Learning Disabilities Network group suggested that travelling to a 'new' library could be possible for someone with a learning disability following travel training.

Option Three

- 16.43 There was some support for Option Three at the Role Model Army session and the Hyde Children's Centre and the Wingfield Children's Centre drop-in sessions insofar as: it retains more libraries than Option Two and more larger libraries than Option Two; and it offers some libraries to communities, which was seen as a positive alternative delivery model.
- 16.44 Others, though, opposed this option on the grounds that volunteers are not an adequate substitute for trained library staff; and that it is difficult to recruit and manage an entirely volunteer-based workforce:

I don't want this to be a replacement for trained librarians, who have worked hard to become qualified. (Grahame Park Independent Living Group)

Volunteers are not a viable alternative to library staff...only staff know what to do or how to help with specific questions (Older Adults' Partnership Board)

It's very difficult to staff and maintain community libraries...Friern Barnet is an example of the difficulty in finding permanent volunteers. This would eventually lead to closure (Barnet Seniors' Assembly)

I volunteer at Friern Barnet library...it's difficult getting enough regular volunteers to run a community library. (Barnet Youth Board)

- 16.45 There was, however, no opposition to increasing the number of volunteers working within the Library Service, providing they are properly supervised by a complement (however small) of trained staff.

Alternatives?

- 16.46 The idea of a 'community hub' style library (that incorporates other facilities such as a café, soft play, a small cinema, a post office and various services):

Libraries should be community hubs (Older Adults' Partnership Board)

Look at Harrow Library...a community hub model with a post office, teashop, legal services (Grahame Park Independent Living Group)

Have post offices in libraries along the community hub model (Grahame Park Independent Living Group)

More of a community hub model like in Welwyn Garden City: soft play, independent cinema, library and café in one place. (Voice of the Child Co-ordinator)

Other issues

Specific libraries – Burnt Oak

- 16.47 Someone at the Older Adults’ Partnership Board questioned why Burnt Oak library is threatened with reduction or possible closure when it has only recently been invested in to the tune of £1 million.
- 16.48 It was mentioned at the Barnet Seniors’ Assembly that the London Borough of Harrow is currently consulting on its future library service - and participants expressed concern that one of Harrow’s mitigating factors against library closures is that its residents will be able to use Burnt Oak Library.

Specific libraries – Grahame Park/Colindale

- 16.49 Participants at the Grahame Park Independent Living Group commented that the new Colindale Library should be near a community to ensure it is not isolated.

Specific libraries – Osidge

- 16.50 Osidge Library was mentioned in the context of parking facilities at the Grahame Park Independent Living Group: one participant complained about parking facilities at Barnet’s libraries and claimed that this “puts people off” using certain facilities. Osidge Library was thought to have the “best parking” and there was thus concern that it might close.
- 16.51 The same person expanded on these concerns by saying that Osidge Library is well placed in the local community (near a junior school, health clinic, car park and bus stop). In particular it was seen to be well used by local junior school pupils. Further, a participant at the BCIL group suggested that it is well used by the elderly, who might suffer from its closure.

Consultation process

- 16.52 The consultation process was criticised by the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board, the Older Adults’ Partnership Board and the Grahame Park Independent Living Group – primarily on the grounds that: the three proposed options are ‘flawed’; and that the outcome has been pre-determined:

All three options are fundamentally flawed (Learning Disabilities Partnership Board)

The Council should hold back on a decision on the libraries options; they are too hasty and not fully thought through (Older Adults’ Partnership Board)

Barnet often ‘consults’ on pre-decided proposals...A, B, or C but not an alternative (Learning Disabilities Partnership Board)

Barnet’s consultations have no impact on decision-making (Learning Disabilities Partnership Board)

I have no faith in the Council and feel the decision has already been taken: libraries will close. (Grahame Park Independent Living Group)

- 16.53 The Learning Disabilities Partnership Board was concerned that once the consultation had closed there would be no more engagement with the public and people with learning disabilities in particular. The Board - and the Learning Disabilities Network - supported the idea of continuing to involve learning disabilities organisations and people with learning disabilities in the more detailed development of proposals.

The future

- 16.54 Many participants across several groups felt that LBB (and indeed the library service itself) should better publicise the services provided at libraries in order to raise their public profile and encourage usage:

There is low awareness of the number and location of Barnet libraries and the services they offer. Libraries need to do more to advertise their services...this would lead to a significant increase in usage (Barnet Youth Board)

Libraries should do more to publicise their services in places which target young people, in particular schools (Barnet Youth Board)

The library service needs to better advertise its services (Grahame Park Independent Living Group)

I attend a lovely reading group in Grahame Park Library...better publicity of these groups to recruit more members is needed (Grahame Park Independent Living Group)

There’s an inactivity of the library service to promote what they’re doing (Wingfield Children’s Centre Drop-in)

The library service should be doing more to advertise its services; many people are unaware of the activities for young children on offer (Hyde Children’s Centre Drop-in)

The library service needs to advertise its services better. Libraries should be clearer about what they do and do not do... (Barnet Centre for Independent Living)

- 16.55 The need to improve young people’s perceptions of libraries was noted by the Role Model Army, the Barnet Youth Board and at the Wingfield Children’s Centre Drop-in:

Books are old fashioned and libraries are no longer relevant, particularly to younger people. They might be good for the old, but younger people don’t think they need them. (Wingfield Children’s Centre Drop-in)

Indeed, there was a general sense among the four Role Model Army participants that young people do not use libraries to the same degree as other sectors of the population and that this is partly due to their image and a lack of publicity. In terms of what might encourage young people to use libraries more they suggested: more community activities, especially those targeted at young people; and better promotion of what libraries offer. (Role Model Army)

- 16.56 One young person at the Barnet Youth Board said there is currently very little space within libraries to study – and also that there are not enough power points for laptops. In fact, throughout the discussion with the Youth Board it was apparent that the relationship between young people, libraries and quality and quantity of study space is important, and that this space could be improved in the following ways:

Improved IT services (echoed by the BCIL and Learning Disabilities Partnership Board groups)

Improved Wi-Fi via better connection and unlimited data (there was a suggestion for a monthly subscription to unlimited free Wi-Fi – possibly £5 a month, with concession rates)

More sockets to plug in laptops as young people are more likely to use their own laptops in libraries than the library computers

The provision of a quiet study room separate to the rest of the library

The availability of refreshments in a co-located café as young people prefer to work in comfortable environments for study

More comfortable tables and chairs.

^{16.57} Improving the accessibility of future libraries for disabled people was considered imperative by the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board, particularly in relation to: having computers, desks and other facilities at a level that suits all people including wheelchair users; having all facilities such as toilets on one accessible level; and enlarging libraries to accommodate electric wheelchairs.

17. Drop-in Sessions

Main findings from 14 library drop-in sessions and three days on the mobile library route)

Overview

17.1 18 drop-in sessions (one in each library and four along the mobile library route) were arranged to allow local residents to have their say on LBB’s future options for the Libraries Service. These were held at varying times of day (including on weekends) to maximise the number of people able to participate. The schedule and number of attendees (399 in total) was as follows.

Figure 89: Drop-in Sessions

SESSION	TIME AND DATE	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Mill Hill Library	Tuesday 18 th November 2014 (2pm – 5pm)	38
Burnt Oak Library	Thursday 20 th November 2014 (5pm – 8pm)	12
Mobile Library Route	Friday 21 st November 2014 (all day)	9
Chipping Barnet Library	Saturday 22 nd November 2014 (2pm – 5pm)	16
Hendon Library	Monday 24 th November 2014 (2pm – 5pm)	6
East Finchley Library	Wednesday 26 th November 2014 (5pm – 8pm)	110
Mobile Library Route	Thursday 27 th November 2014 (all day)	10
East Barnet Library	Friday 28 th November 2014 (10am – 1pm)	42
Edgware Library	Sunday 30 th November 2014 (2pm – 5pm)	36
Grahame Park Library	Tuesday 2 nd December 2014 (5pm – 8pm)	1
Mobile Library Route	Wednesday 3 rd December 2014 (all day)	11
Golders Green Library	Thursday 4 th December 2014 (10am – 1pm)	20
South Friern Library	Saturday 6 th December 2014 (10am – 1pm)	16
Church End Library	Monday 8 th December 2014 (5pm – 8pm)	12
Mobile Library Route	Tuesday 9 th December 2014 (all day)	7
Childs Hill Library	Wednesday 10 th December 2014 (10am – 1pm)	20
Osidge Library	Friday 12 th December 2014 (2pm – 5pm)	15
North Finchley Library	Saturday 13 th December 2014 (10am – 1pm)	18

17.2 The library-based drop-in discussions were held in 20-minute slots throughout the session. This ensured that they were manageable in terms of size (meaning, importantly, that everyone was able to ‘have their say’) and that no-one was waiting too long for a discussion to begin. On the mobile libraries, more

ad-hoc conversations were held with those using the service on that particular day. Facilitators had a broad agenda based around the three proposed options and their associated key elements – and also encouraged attendees to raise any appropriate and feasible alternative options they wished.

Main Findings

Common features of the three proposed options

'Open' library (and reducing staffed hours)

- 17.3 The prospect of reducing staffed hours was not welcomed: drop-in attendees were strongly of the view that most people desire information, personal contact and some level of assistance when visiting libraries, especially if they are older or vulnerable:

It is important to have staff on the front-line. We want to be able to phone up and speak to someone directly and not have to go through a switchboard (Chipping Barnet)

There's the negative impact of all the options on older users. Many don't have computers or smartphones so come here to go online. People are always waiting for a PC even though it takes so long; it's the staff who we need, they patiently help me get online. I have never seen anyone help older people with computers so patiently anywhere else. I feel I can ask any question and not be made to feel foolish (Golders Green)

Without staff how will people get that help to get online, find books, manage with temperamental PCs? (Golders Green)

It's the lack of access to help and assistance which is the problem with the model (South Friern)

If they reduce the staff in libraries you wouldn't be able to access their technology knowledge (Church End)

I'm seeing this process as the 'de-professionalisation' of libraries (Church End)

I feel comfortable in the traditional library...having staff around who can answer queries (Mobile)

It is extremely important to have staff so that you can have tuition in how to use the computers. Staff are also important to give you information on the different books (Mobile)

I don't think self-service is a good idea; it's taking away the personal factor. People won't talk to each other (Mobile)

You need the staff. They're integral to the library. You can't take them away! (Mobile)

- 17.4 People were concerned about several aspects of the open library system, particularly that: children and young people would be unable to use it without adult accompaniment; the safety of users (especially vulnerable users) could be compromised; there would be increased potential for anti-social behaviour and theft; CCTV monitoring would be insufficiently robust; there would be no first aid assistance available; the technology will not be sufficiently reliable to last all day; and rooms would not be kept tidy. Some of the very many typical comments are:

Open access will only be available to a restricted group of the community, for example younger members of the community won't be able to make use of it (Chipping Barnet)

It is a public amenity; it's not appropriate to have no staff members in the library. The library should be a place of safety. Children can be safe; and they can come and use it for educational purposes (Chipping Barnet)

Will children be able to use it? Will there be a lower age limit? It could restrict access for children under 16 using the library for study (East Barnet)

Parents won't want their children using it when unstaffed so it means children won't be able to use it (Golders Green)

Will children be able to use the library during open library hours? If they don't have safe places to go they will often go to unsafe places... (South Friern)

I wouldn't feel safe coming here and there would be drug users just here to hang out (Burnt Oak)

I'm worried about first aid or emergency response if unstaffed (Hendon)

Has the use of CCTV monitoring been adequately assessed? Is there evidence for and against this? (Chipping Barnet)

There will be problems with vandalism and theft of stock and these problems will in turn be used as a future excuse to close libraries (East Barnet)

People will steal books and equipment (Edgware)

The big issue will be security and theft if the library is unattended (Golders Green)

How can you have an unstaffed library? Surely vandalism would be a problem (Mobile)

There's going to be a security problem. It's going to be just like people sneaking through the gate in the tube by going in straight after another person. Libraries could be a conduit for anti-social behaviour... (Church End)

What about keeping the space tidy and clean during the day? Cleaning, re-shelving, sorting out software glitches during the day, printer jams? (Golders Green)

I'm more worried about the reliability of IT and other equipment than security...RFID readers, self-check etc. etc. all needs resetting at some point in the day (Golders Green)

The IT currently is very unreliable so how can this ICT-reliant system work effectively? (Hendon)

- 17.5 Developing a system around peak hours was considered inappropriate insofar as different types of library users use the service at different times: it was thus suggested that many users will be disadvantaged by only having staff available at what are considered to be traditionally 'peak' times:

How do you define peak hours? This will be different across the community for mothers, schoolchildren and those who work (Chipping Barnet)

It is necessary to consider the whole community as they all need different opening times; it is not sufficient just to look at individuals. (Chipping Barnet)

- 17.6 Chipping Barnet attendees questioned the origin of the open access model and whether there is sufficient evidence available to demonstrate its success:

Is there any evidence of this working for libraries across the other local authorities in the UK? (Chipping Barnet)

The model seems like cloud cuckoo land. Other organisations, notably banks, have tried unstaffed access and most have pulled it. (South Friern)

- 17.7 Further, one person questioned how well a model developed to work in a Scandinavian context would translate to the UK:

There is no evidence this Scandinavian model works they are following it blindly (Edgware)

The Danish comparison is a bad example because levels of respect for community property is sadly lower here. (South Friern)

- 17.8 More positively, a minority of participants saw open access as a constructive way to maintain services - providing residents are made fully aware of when staff will be available for assistance:

At least it means we keep more library space and buildings. (Mill Hill)

- 17.9 Moreover, it was said that opening hours should be amended to capture those who wish to use the library either early in the morning or late at night – and there was some recognition that unstaffed hours may allow this:

Longer hours...opening at 9am misses hundreds of people who might use it before nine. (East Finchley)

Income generation

- 17.10 There was a strong sense that the libraries service could be significantly more enterprising and visionary in terms of income generation. Some of the many suggested ways for raising revenue were:

Renting out space for activities where possible (possibly at a reduced rate to attract more local groups and clubs and using local residents as keyholders to open and lock up after hours)

We really should have shelves and bookcases on wheels as the basic way to enable these spaces to earn money by renting out. If shelving was fully moveable there would be so many options for hiring out (Edgware)

If you want to be truly commercial then what you would do is use libraries for more things that bring more money into the service on an ongoing basis like hiring out the upstairs space for groups, classes etc. and having film shows and lectures in the evenings. All of this should be accompanied by early and late opening assisted by volunteers (Osidge)

If you reduced the room hire rate you would tap into a huge market of smaller clubs and groups who need spaces like this and overall income would be higher (East Barnet)

People are willing to help. For example, the cost of room hire in normal hours is ok, but outside those hours it is very high because of cost of staff to open and lock-up. Local residents would be happy to take on the role of keyholders, which would reduce hire-cost, still make money, and enable more groups to use the space. It would tap into a whole market of smaller groups who can afford the hire fees but not the extra staff fees to open up (South Friern)

Incorporating coffee shops into libraries (such as the 'well used' one at Hendon Library) or entering into partnerships with local bookstores

People can have coffee and sit around and chat, rather than go to Starbucks (Chipping Barnet)

Rent out space for things which enhance libraries like cafes and bookstores (Mill Hill)

We could have a café here like at Hendon (Edgware)

A café? I suggested it previously for this library but was told it was not possible yet it would earn money and attract more visitors (East Barnet)

This library would be good location for a coffee shop which would bring income. (South Friern)

Entering into partnerships with local academic institutions

The Institute (a local adult education college) has had to move to save money itself. This library could be used to help serve those people and generate income; it could host the adult education college or provide something in its place. Why didn't the Council invite them to rent space here? (East Finchley)

Holy Trinity took a 'bulge year' and had to turn their library into a classroom so why not offer them a service? (East Finchley)

In Hendon, are we charging Middlesex Uni for the service their students benefit from (especially study space, hours tailored to students' needs) or are we basically subsidising the Uni? (South Friern)

Middlesex University should contribute to the cost of Hendon Library because so many students use it (Mill Hill)

Charging for computer classes (though remaining free for those who cannot afford to pay)

Showing older people how to use the technology this would be something you could charge for (Chipping Barnet)

Even if there were small charges people would still come. You could raise revenue in many ways...for example computer lessons (Golders Green)

Charging for activities such as Stay and Play, music groups and book clubs - and especially for over-subscribed activities

Over-subscribed services are obvious opportunities to introduce charging (East Finchley)

I'd pay and would buy lunch (Mill Hill)

I'd pay £2-3 for Rhyme Time (Hendon)

Would people be averse to paying for things like book clubs? Not all pensioners are on the poverty line (Mill Hill)

Introducing more chargeable services such as soft play, foreign language classes, literacy classes, theatre groups, job clubs, talks, book clubs and a conversation café:

We had charging for stay and play before; why not bring that back? (Edgware)

The inability to speak English disenfranchises people from the community...classes to learn English as a second language could be offered (Chipping Barnet)

Foreign language conversation groups could be offered (Chipping Barnet)

They should do more things like having authors coming into libraries to do talks. It would be even better to have notable local people coming in to speak (Church End)

We come to talks here; we would like to see more of these. And people would pay to attend... (Osidge)

Could we generate interest in this building for things like book clubs where we pay a subscription? I'm a member of something like that already (East Barnet)

Developing an online shopping pick-up service

They should definitely have on-line shopping pick-up points (Amazon, Doodle). It adds to the service and brings income (South Friern)

Charging for e-books, DVDs and music rental

Hiring out space for birthday parties or even weddings

Use more library space as function room space which can be hired out to bring in income (Burnt Oak)

Holding more book fairs or sales.

^{17.11} In addition to the above, hosting other organisations within libraries (and, where possible, charging them for the privilege) was strongly advocated in terms of income generation and ensuring greater sustainability. Some specific suggestions made as follows – and it should be noted that the first (80 Daws Lane) was raised at several sessions:

Why not host the proposed 80 Daws Lane Hub in the library? This would be more efficient and would bring in income (Mill Hill)

I like the idea of other things related to the Council coming in here...people would feel in touch with their Council and they would feel like they are getting a response from the people that they finance (Chipping Barnet)

Get other complementary services into the library, contributing to the cost...for example families and children's services (Mill Hill)

Job centre staff could be located here; the jobseekers could make use of the computers and internet in the library (Chipping Barnet)

The library is the ideal place for Citizens Advice Bureau (Chipping Barnet)

What investigations are being made on the space of the library to other services? I'm talking about the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Police (Church End)

What about having a sub-post office here too? That could bring footfall and income too (South Friern)

This could be an access point for Police teams (Chipping Barnet)

There could be a health centre in the library as a source of health advice (Chipping Barnet)

Rent out rooms to meet the funding gap, especially to independent health therapists (East Barnet)

Market the space to complementary health practitioners like chiropodists, chiropractors etc. (Mill Hill)

Can't we rent rooms to the WEA or University of the Third Age so they can run activities which are a service to the community? Or other services especially for younger children? (East Barnet)

The University of the Third Age...they have a strong client base but are desperate for space for computer courses for older folk (Osidge)

Why not have hot desk space for small firms and start-ups or hire out study spaces like upstairs at Hendon (Edgware)

You should do something which generates serious income. One obvious thing would be a nursery; the borough needs nurseries. Each child brings in £50 per day around here. I have seen first-hand how some nurseries struggle to find premises. We use a building which we sub-let part of to a nursery; the income pays the bills. Go talk to people like Nightingale Day Nurseries. Give them some security; like a five-year lease, and ask them to invest (Osidge)

There are nurseries with a good business but no secure home. There are libraries which have the space but not enough income – so surely... This is what being commercially astute would look like. (Osidge)

- 17.12 There was support for an optional 'Friends of' scheme that incorporates not only a financial subscription (possibly means-tested) but also a requirement to assist with fundraising activities and provide practical hands-on help:

I reckon up to 2,000 people in Mill Hill might join a Friends scheme. I would pay £50 a year so 2000 x £50 (Mill Hill)

I would start by approaching library members; would they contribute money monthly? Give people the choice of paying for it, especially those who can afford it... (Mill Hill)

Why not have annual fees to raise money to keep the staff? Payments could be scaled by the ability to pay...we should invite the community to join (Hendon)

I am originally from Antwerp where they introduced a membership scheme; 5 Euros to start with then 10 Euros. They also have a two Euro charge for children's activities. It works; it is a sensible option (Golders Green)

We could pay a monthly or annual sum like £12 per annum (£1 per month) and there are lots of other creative versions you could have for optional giving (Edgware)

I would pay, plus if you had an annual subscription or donation you could also collect Gift Aid to boost income (East Barnet)

In some countries there are certain community assets for which people pay a Tithe in recognition of the value the community places on it; in Finland they pay a Tithe towards the local Church. Why not have something similar for libraries? (Osidge)

- 17.13 Another suggestion was that 'Friends' could be designated key-holders to increase opportunities for evening hire income.

Relocation and redevelopment

- 17.14 People were not averse to redeveloping libraries, either on existing sites or elsewhere. For example, at Mill Hill and Chipping Barnet it was suggested that careful consideration should be given to mixed developments incorporating residential housing or retail developments and libraries:

Is there potential for redevelopment as housing and library mixed development like Clapham library? (Mill Hill)

Library services could be funded by building a block of flats and keeping the library on the ground floor (Chipping Barnet)

This consultation should be about co-creating the options, just like they did with Brent Cross Shopping Centre. (East Finchley)

Retention of the mobile library

17.15 Overall, few of the mobile library users consulted were aware of the proposed changes or the consultation - nor did many comment on the three options discussed below (where preferences were expressed, they were fairly evenly spread; perhaps with a slight preference for Option Two because fewer, larger libraries would be able to offer more services).

17.16 However, as might be expected, the mobile library was considered essential by users - especially those who have difficulties accessing libraries elsewhere due to transport or mobility issues. People were thus glad to hear that the service is not under threat:

Even if main libraries are close to transport hubs, my problem is getting to the bus route in the first place. The mobile library helps me stay where I live; I like the area and people (Mobile)

I’m basically happy if can continue to use the Mobile Library. It’s a lifeline...I borrow three or four books a week (Mobile)

It’s important to keep the Mobile Library. There is now only one stop per week whereas it used to stop a number of times. The fact that you can park near the Mobile Library is important (Mobile)

As long as we keep the mobile library I’m happy. (Mobile)

17.17 There was, though, some suggestion that LBB could ‘make more of it’ and better promote it as a service:

Make more of the Mobile Library with more frequent and more routes (Mobile)

Indeed, it was said that if any of Barnet’s libraries are to close, the mobile library will become increasingly important - and that if this is the case improvements to certain aspects such as internet access and the range of books on offer are essential:

The mobile library is important. We may end up needing more mobile libraries. The problem with mobile is the limited range of children’s books. Also, we used to have Internet but it stopped working and wasn’t replaced, which meant staff couldn’t find information for users. (Mobile)

Alternative delivery models

17.18 Though there was some acceptance that LBB should consider alternative delivery models as a means to mitigate against library service reductions, outsourcing was opposed by many on the grounds of poor experience elsewhere:

I come to Barnet though I live on the Harrow side of the boundary because their services have gone downhill due to lack of funding, all since they were outsourced (Edgware)

I would only support outsourcing if it were to an organisation which re-invested all profits and surpluses into the service...no private distribution of profit from the service. I am also worried about the impact on the quality of jobs. For example, Your Choice Barnet, an ALMO, has cut their own wages and reduced T&Cs. (Osidge)

- 17.19 There was, however, some support for alternative delivery via a Trust or some form of community partnership - and links with schools and other educational providers were supported at Childs Hill, Church End and Osidge, providing proper safeguarding procedures can be implemented:

Why not have an East Middlesex Library Trust? It would pursue all these ideas for improving the service (East Barnet)

I think there is potential in something which links the management of council-run libraries to the local community. For instance, in one branch some users offered to lock-up after an evening meeting they wanted to hire the library for but were told they were not allowed. So that meant no meeting and also no room hire income. What if each library had a partnership with some local users; they could take on roles like this to open up new opportunities? A 'local committee' which might also help break down bureaucracy and think more creatively and entrepreneurially. This local committee could lead on maximising the use of the assets and build revenue-earning partnerships with supplementary schools, clubs, classes etc. (Osidge)

More could be done to use links with other services to promote use of the library. The library has a good link with the primary school next door which could be built upon. But safeguarding could be an issue in linking with schools (Childs Hill)

If lots of children are using libraries as study spaces then why not create new partnerships with schools not just colleges and Unis? (Osidge)

- 17.20 At Golders Green though, there was concern that the loss of library buildings and space as proposed by LBB will result in a service that is unattractive to any alternative service provider:

If you lose the buildings then what is there left in the service for a new Trust or outsourced organisation like GLL? Without buildings there is nothing left... (Golders Green)

At least Wandsworth keep the value in the service so there is something an external provider can get to grips with and do something with. (Golders Green)

Three proposed options

Option One

- 17.21 People were typically of the view that 540 square feet is too small to house a modern library and all its associated activities - particularly those involving children. Some of the very many typical comments were:

I'm not too sure about the smaller libraries as they will have less books, meaning less choice for us (Mobile)

They're going to have to decide what books these small libraries would stock. Are they going to have one that stocks history, one that stocking music and so on? (Church End)

I think those mini libraries are absolutely tragic. How can you go somewhere to relax and chill when it's that small? (Mobile)

I cannot see what you could actually do in 540 square feet so it's a non-starter (Osidge)

This library is used in social ways but 540 square feet will end the ability to use the space socially (Edgware)

I disagree that 540 square feet could feasibly fit the range of services described. For Mill Hill this would mean losing space for group and community activities...Rhyme Time, coffee mornings, language lessons... (Mill Hill)

It will really reduce the activities which can be held here: conversations cafes; other meetups; opportunities for people to make friends (Golders Green)

How will we have learning programmes for older people in smaller libraries? (Mobile)

I am from Afghanistan and speak Pashtun and Farsi. I come here with my daughter aged 4 for the conversation café to improve my English. It really helps me and my daughter (Osidge)

I have been to Rhyme Time at St John's Wood Library which is very small and it was a disaster; the space was unusable and too small for children (Hendon)

Reducing space does not take account of the practicalities of the children's activities (East Finchley)

How is it possible to run a Rhyme Time in a 540 square foot space? No-one else would fit in when it's on (Edgware)

What's going to happen to the parent and baby sessions if the libraries are decreased in size? (Church End)

Making libraries smaller would mean losing space for study. Also smaller libraries would find it difficult to have a children's section (Mobile)

Would be very worried if it led to a reduction in the children's library or children's activities here. (Golders Green)

Indeed, at Mill Hill it was said that: *'I would rather see staffing levels reduced if it meant more square footage'.*

- 17.22 There was a strong sense that reducing library size is a precursor to closing them entirely as people will consider them unfit for purpose and will simply stop using them:

If we fight to keep it open at 540 feet then it will be so unsuitable that people will struggle to use it and then they will say no-one uses it, therefore we don't need it at all (East Barnet)

If libraries are reduced to the smallest proposed size it would lead to a decrease in library use through the loss of the activities that people value. This would then lead to the library having to be closed (Childs Hill)

I don't like the first option. You're effectively closing down 10 of the libraries! Reduced size means closure to me (Mobile)

It's absurd; it will mean fewer people visit and that will be used as rationale for further reductions (Golders Green)

Shrinking the library to the size of a living room - how can they do it? It is a precursor to closing! I bet they have already got developers ready to step in and buy the land! (North Finchley)

If you reduce the size of North Finchley Library it won't be a library service! It will give the Council the excuse to close it. Actually the more honest approach would be to close it. (North Finchley)

- 17.23 It was said that this option may result in fewer savings than anticipated (or indeed savings that are realised some years down the line) due to the costs of reconfiguring the remainder of the library space to render it suitable for commercial or any other rental use:

The cost of remodelling 10 libraries would weigh against savings; when is the point in time the costs are repaid by the savings? (Mill Hill)

The rationale seems wrong. To reconfigure the spaces of 10 libraries will cost money not save money (Burnt Oak)

The cost of reducing the size of this library is surely very large? How much? (Golders Green)

The modification itself will cost lots of money (Golders Green)

This is a non-starter in an open plan library. If the library is going to rent out to businesses, they would need to start building walls. (Chipping Barnet)

- 17.24 Also, some participants foresaw insufficient demand for the remaining space (resulting in less income generation than anticipated) - though others noted that some library space is already rented out and could indeed be better utilised by community groups and others:

There is no proof that anyone wants to rent it out (Chipping Barnet)

There are lots of empty shop fronts along the streets in Barnet (Chipping Barnet)

I am sceptical of the potential to let out the remaining 90% of this space...how, to who? (Golders Green)

If pursued vigorously enough, they could take trade off Wesley Hall (Chipping Barnet)

With all this wonderful space it must be possible for the library service to make money (Mill Hill)

There is more scope to use the space for recreational activities and children’s groups. I think it’s under-used... (Chipping Barnet)

Downstairs here there are all those spaces and they are all closed right now (from 5-8pm): you could hire them out; they could be drop-in office spaces (Hendon)

There’s lots of scope for more room rental of the existing space (Mill Hill)

People could pay to rent here in the library instead of Barnet House or North London Business Park; the four core libraries have the space. (Chipping Barnet)

- 17.25 A larger minimum size of 1,500 square feet was suggested at East Barnet: *“it would at least be big enough for what we think you need for it to be a library”.*

- 17.26 People questioned what would happen to the surplus books, reference collection and locally-specific archive and other collections under Option One.

- 17.27 At Edgware and Golders Green it was said that the proposed change to library size would *“hit observant Jews particularly hard because the library is where these families can access technology which they don’t have at home. Less space means less IT and unstaffed opening is likely to mean IT won’t be available. Sunday is a particularly important day when Jewish families use the library together”.* (Edgware)

- 17.28 There was a minority view that downsizing is preferable to outright closure insofar as ‘when it’s gone it’s gone’ and it allows for future re-expansion if required:

At least if you keep them open there is something there to expand on in the future; but when they close that’s it (Mill Hill)

Would be better than closure if you could expand it again in the future. (South Friern)

- 17.29 Further, at Chipping Barnet and among mobile library users there was a sense that 'no closures' is certainly the most preferable starting point and that Option One is the least offensive for everyone - providing, of course, that sufficient income generation is possible. The overall sense (though some residents again felt that even this is 'unbearable') was that the principle of closing libraries is wrong and that it is thus sensible to reduce their size and rent out surplus space:

Option One keeps the existing network but there is a need to generate income (Chipping Barnet)

I prefer Option One as it somewhat retains most of the service (Mobile)

If I had to make a choice I would prefer to keep them all and reduce the size of some (Mobile)

If I have to make a choice, I feel it is better to have a spread of libraries to ensure accessibility (Mobile)

However there were also concerns that once the Council reduce the size of certain libraries, they are unlikely to increase them in size again.

Option Two

- 17.30 At Chipping Barnet, Church End and Hendon, this was seen as less preferable than Option One insofar as it is 'uncivilised to close libraries' and could lead to the disenfranchisement of a large number of people across the borough - primarily those people who need libraries most:

This is the simple option, to close six libraries and carry on as normal. However this is very large borough, by doing so they are disenfranchising people (Chipping Barnet)

These options are cutting out the lower social demographics. Option Two is bad for the people that really need the libraries most. I know that a lot of people in Burnt Oak wouldn't be willing to travel to Hendon (Church End)

This would be a severe disadvantage to those people in the six areas where the libraries close and it will hurt the very people we should be helping most (Hendon)

- 17.31 Further, there was criticism of the stated aim under Option Two - and indeed Option Three - that '95% of people in Barnet are able to reach a library in less than 30 minutes using public transport' - with some arguing that 30 minutes would only just be achievable in a car in some cases. Indeed, several people commented on the difficult journeys they would encounter if required to use alternative libraries:

30 minutes away is very inconsistent with the stated goal of a 'service that engages with communities' (Mill Hill)

Parents won't go to Hendon because it is 30 minutes there and another 30 mins back...a one hour round trip (Mill Hill)

'Accessible within 30 minutes'...this doesn't include the time waiting for the bus, getting to the bus stop and getting home. It is important to have access for all, for children that is time they could be studying (Chipping Barnet)

30 minutes is very misleading as transport times in London are so variable. One day you might spend 30 minutes just waiting for buses (Hendon)

The 30 minutes by transport is misleading as it might be 30 minutes on the timetable but it can take much longer than that to get to North Finchley... (South Friern)

30 minutes either way on public transport is an hour return journey. Also, with more than one child, I really think some people aren't going to be able to afford it (Church End)

95% of people will be able to access the library within half an hour. Really? How have they worked that out? It is a paper exercise. There is no allowance for pensioners (North Finchley)

If Child's Hill library closes, many local residents would find it impractical or impossible to travel to other libraries (Hendon and Golders Green being the nearest). The 30 minute travel time is a misrepresentation (Child's Hill)

The calculations for this were based on a journey from the centre of one postcode to another, not on the travel time door to door between libraries and did not account for having to wait for buses or change buses (Child's Hill)

I would have to go to Chipping, but it would be too far. We'd lose the possibility of using the library (East Barnet)

There is nothing else in East Barnet except this place. It's quite isolated and you cannot get more than two pushchairs on the bus which means getting to Chipping by bus is difficult or even impossible. (East Barnet)

- 17.32 Further to the above, the potential negative impact of library closures on accessibility for people with physical disabilities was noted at Chipping Barnet and Edgware:

The closures will leave gaps in the library service in Barnet. How do people such as wheelchair users or people with mobility issues get to their nearest library? With regards to the Equality Act, services should be accessible for all (Chipping Barnet)

How will people with disabilities get from Burnt Oak and Mill Hill to another library? (Edgware)

- 17.33 The area's current and forecast population growth was not thought to have been sufficiently considered by LBB in developing an option that would result in the closure of six libraries:

The population is rising, and will continue to increase but they are cutting services...the potential of libraries hasn't been realised (Golders Green)

How does the decision to close libraries sit with responding to the needs of a growing population? Barnet used to pride itself on its libraries (Mobile)

What about the local population growth...there will be 10,000 new homes in Colindale. I can't understand the logic of closing libraries when we are meant to be increasing facilities and amenities for a growing population. £2.85 million over four years is peanuts in the context of the speed at which the borough's population is growing. (Mobile)

- 17.34 The criteria for identifying which libraries remain and which close was considered somewhat opaque: there was a strong feeling that the selection has not been made on any fixed criteria (and it was alleged that the decision may have been a political one):

No reasons are given for why each of the libraries highlighted for closure have been chosen. But they are mostly in opposition Wards. This gives the impression that the models are influenced by political factors rather than the stated criteria. (Osidge)

- 17.35 Ultimately, this option was essentially seen by many as a ‘messy’ set of trade-offs: they discarded it for the reasons outlined above. There was, however, some support for it at Mill Hill, Church End, East Barnet and among mobile library users: these participants supported larger ‘hub’ style facilities, which they felt would allow greater potential for entrepreneurship:

The only possibly acceptable option is Two; the others are ridiculous (East Barnet)

If we’ve got to save money then I would go for Option Two (Mobile)

I tend towards fewer larger libraries, but only if they are in the right place (Mobile)

We’d be better off with four useful libraries. Maybe a master library in Barnet would be good? I’d like to get on a bus and go to a hub, knowing it’s going to be good (Church End)

If had to pick one I’d pick Option Two as it has more staffed opening hours. It’s more traditional (Church End)

In those which remain space allows more entrepreneurial activity...for example room hire, cafés etc. This is impossible in Option One. (Mill Hill)

- 17.36 In terms of comments made on particular libraries, participants disputed the assertion that **Burnt Oak Library** suffers from poor transport links and from being incorrectly located:

I don’t understand the logic of Burnt Oak being classed as not having good transport or not being where it’s needed. It has great transport links, is well used and is in an area of social need (Burnt Oak)

It’s not true that it has poor access or bad transport links. It’s right next to Tube. (Burnt Oak)

- 17.37 **Childs Hill Library** was thought to serve a relatively deprived neighbourhood for whom library access is particularly important, and was described as the ‘last remaining community amenity’:

There are some quite deprived communities within Child’s Hill and Cricklewood. Library access for these communities is particularly important (Childs Hill)

There is a lack of other community facilities in the area: the community centre burned down some years ago and has not been replaced. Local church halls can meet some of the need but they aren’t neutral spaces for all local residents. The local Post Office has closed, and local pubs. The library is the last remaining community amenity. (Childs Hill)

It was also questioned: ‘is it known that Childs Hill library (or the land it’s on) was covenanted for the benefit of the people of Childs Hill?’ (Childs Hill)

- 17.38 The benefits of **East Barnet Library** were noted: namely that it is in close proximity to many local schools and other local amenities; has good transport links; and offers many beneficial activities such as computer classes to the local community:

East Barnet is near schools, allotments, supermarkets, elderly people, the park and it’s on the way to the tube. East Barnet can’t close. They also run computer classes (Hendon)

- 17.39 **East Finchley Library** was considered essential in terms of access for local residents; participants here described how they would have to undertake difficult journeys to access other libraries:

I would have to take the 263 bus all the way to Chipping Barnet (East Finchley)

I could not take my six children on the bus to Hendon (East Finchley)

Because of disability I use this library very frequently...it would be hard to get anywhere else (East Finchley)

When there was a power outage people had to use Hendon but many people did not know how to get there. (East Finchley)

- 17.40 It was also said that local schools (including Oak Lodge, a specialist school for children and young people with learning difficulties) and schoolchildren are reliant on East Finchley Library - and that the community is closely watching for what is planned for the building itself given that it is listed for library use only:

Local schools, in particular Oak Lodge, are very reliant on this library (East Finchley)

Martin Primary School use it in class and with parents (East Finchley)

I go to Archer Academy which has a very small library and no revision books, so I come here and without this library I would have no options (East Finchley)

This is a listed building; the community are watching closely what happens to it. (East Finchley)

However, if it is to be maintained, users felt that it should be enhanced to enable better use of its facilities:

This library is not fully utilised; it needs to be maximised so don't keep it as it is now...install a lift, use the upstairs more. (East Finchley)

- 17.41 **Osidge Library** was considered accessible for children, families and elderly people both on foot and by public transport - and was described as the only community 'hub' in the locality:

It's near to elderly people, schools, the park etc. Families can go to the library. It's near to the doctor's surgery and it's on a bus route (Chipping Barnet)

I'm strongly opposed to closing this library; there is nowhere else nearby at all (Osidge)

This is the only community hub in the area and it is owned by the Council so costs them nothing compared to new spaces which they would have to pay to build or rent. (Osidge)

- 17.42 **South Friern Library** was described as an 'integral' community resource, one of the few in the local area. It was also argued that footfall at the library is increasing, not falling as the consultation documents suggest:

If the library is closed there will be no public library at all in this Ward (South Friern)

This is a great library; an integral part of the community. I just want it to stay as it is (South Friern)

The rooms here are busy and heavily used for Cllr Surgeries, for clubs and activities, for residents' associations...it is a really good location (South Friern)

There are no other community services in this area besides this library. That's why footfall is rising. The report makes it appear that footfall has fallen at South Friern which is not correct (South Friern)

Option Three

- 17.43 There were significant doubts in many drop-in sessions over whether the number of volunteers or groups willing to operate multiple community-run libraries would be sufficient given the lack of community activism in some (especially poorer) areas:

The level of volunteering is not realistic based on my own experience (Mill Hill)

Running something with volunteers is hard to manage; we run the Residents' Association and getting volunteers is really hard work (Burnt Oak)

Recruitment, training and management of volunteers is difficult. Friern Barnet struggles to attract sufficient volunteers (Childs Hill)

I would worry about relying on volunteers. Hampstead Garden Suburb has a very strong community. Relying on volunteers might not work in other communities where that capacity doesn't already exist (Mobile)

Consideration has to be given to the practicalities of working with volunteers and ensuring they get training to deliver a good service. It has to be recognised that: the time of volunteers can't be scheduled in the same way as people being paid; older volunteers may have a shorter energy span and need to take time off to visit the doctor; and that people volunteering as a way of getting experience may go on to get a job... (Mobile)

I'm very sceptical that volunteers can be recruited and retained for a sufficient length of time (Hendon)

Burnt Oak is one of the poorer areas; community activism tends to be lower in poorer areas. (Burnt Oak)

^{17.44} Other concerns raised in relation to community-run libraries were that: research from other areas shows that they tend to suffer service decline after a few years; existing volunteer-run services function more as community centres than libraries; a lack of volunteer management and supervision may result in a poorer service; an over-reliance on volunteers will result in the loss of 'real' jobs; and that they may be excluded from the inter-library loan network:

Research from Oxfordshire libraries shows volunteer-run libraries decline after a few years (East Finchley)

The volunteer run libraries are community hubs but not libraries (Burnt Oak)

Who will train them and manage them? And what kinds of people will they be? Will they all be old? (Edgware)

Who is going to direct and manage the volunteers and what will the calibre of the volunteers be? (Burnt Oak)

Volunteers make sense in a charity shop but in the library it would feel like you were taking someone's job (Chipping Barnet)

An over-reliance on volunteers takes away from real jobs (Burnt Oak)

I am very concerned about the job losses this would lead to also (Edgware)

Having the 'community-led' volunteer libraries would also mean a loss of jobs. The people currently working in the libraries have trained specifically to be librarians. Volunteers would do a worse job (Mobile)

Using volunteers to run libraries is pushing trained people out, leading to a loss of skilled, trained staff in favour of amateurs (Mobile)

You can't replace current staff with volunteers. You can't take something that you need a degree in and let volunteers do it. There's a lot more to being a librarian than shelving (Church End)

Would community run libraries be able to get books through inter-library loans from other libraries? Can they join those catalogue systems? (Osidge)

If they are staffed by volunteers they will be out of the network; you would lose the network. (North Finchley)

^{17.45} Chipping Barnet drop-in attendees were particularly opposed to this option, describing it as ‘*even worse than the worst*’. In addition to reiterating the concerns outlined above, they were worried about the practicalities and feasibility of using volunteers to run a library - and especially about the loss of professional staff, the presence of whom was considered vital and irreplaceable in terms of knowledge, management and the unique skill set they possess. Some of the many typical comments from this session were:

You cannot run a library on volunteers (Chipping Barnet)

People have to have the staff members; volunteers may not know the answers to questions from the public. People (working here) need to be knowledgeable and good with people (Chipping Barnet)

The staff members have the depth of knowledge required; this may not be the case with non-specialists (Chipping Barnet)

Who will check the bills and stock if it is run by volunteers? It wouldn't work if it was run by volunteers; we need a professional librarian (Chipping Barnet)

How can voluntary staff run the library? There are issues with Health and Safety, First Aid and Security (Chipping Barnet)

What about the quality of stock? Who would the volunteers be? Would they be given training? Will they be devoted? (Chipping Barnet)

Librarians could teach research skills to school children. Whilst this won't generate any income it shows the value of the service and helps to integrate schools and libraries (Chipping Barnet)

Chartered librarians are important; they can discuss the stock. (Chipping Barnet)

^{17.46} Indeed, that the Council should retain at least some responsibility for library provision was keenly felt at Chipping Barnet, where participants were also concerned that community-run libraries will simply be a pre-cursor to closure:

Yes, offer some services to the community, but that doesn't mean walk away from it. The Council still need to provide the infrastructure (Chipping Barnet)

Offering libraries to the community is just another way of saying they are going to close them. (Chipping Barnet)

^{17.47} It should be noted that the reservations reported above were not in relation to the use of volunteers per se, but only to entirely community-run libraries. Indeed, there was a definite sense that using volunteers could be useful in bolstering current service provision - and several attendees suggested that they would be keen to volunteer, but only in a professional, staff-led environment:

They should make more use of volunteers for the appropriate things but we need staff with the appropriate skills (Chipping Barnet)

You need paid staff but volunteers can add value to services. You don't need very many professionals at all; you could run something with just a couple of paid staff, plus volunteers (South Friern)

I would prefer to have volunteers working with a librarian rather than just volunteers as I like the access to knowledge and expertise the librarians offer (Mobile)

I would be happy to come here and volunteer in a council-run library, supporting paid staff - but not in a volunteer run library. (East Finchley)

Essentially, the general sense was that: *'a balance of 50/50 works but not 100% volunteers'* (Burnt Oak).

Suggested alternatives

^{17.48} Although there was some recognition that LBB has real budgetary challenges and that the library service must change, very many attendees were keen to stress that they did not support any of the three options, which they variously described as, among other terms: 'inappropriate'; 'restricted'; 'dire'; 'painful'; 'unimaginative'; 'outrageous'; and 'lacking in ambition'. Some typical comments were:

The likelihood of staying the same is zero; the library service needs to change and the Council have to reduce their budgets (Childs Hill)

There are few choices left to be honest. The Council has cut things that people don't care about. Now they either cut good services that people like or increase council tax (Church End)

All of the three options are inappropriate...people should not be coerced into picking bad options (Chipping Barnet)

The three options are a lamentably restricted range of options and they need to go back to the drawing board (Chipping Barnet)

The options are all about doing less; there is a real lack of ambition and lack of understanding of what libraries are (East Finchley)

The proposals are very unimaginative. We need more imagination, more ideas to raise revenue...we need to ask people what their vision is for libraries (East Finchley)

I want an option which shows vision and rethinks what a library should be in the 21st Century and rethinks how to raise revenue (East Finchley)

They need to come forward with better proposals. This is just about the money it seems, not the service (East Barnet)

I don't believe any of these options meet the requirements of the 1964 Act (East Barnet)

All the proposals are outrageous; libraries change lives (Golders Green)

I've been going to libraries all my life. It's outrageous to close them... (Mobile)

The options seem very badly thought through; it is hard to comprehend the thinking behind it, seems very cut and paste (Osidge)

All the options are pretty dire. There should be no cuts (Church End)

Looking at these options, it's like saying 'which one of your limbs would you like to cut off?' (Church End)

- 17.49 It was also suggested that the options are too 'sweeping' in both their scope and their generality - and that LBB should adopt a more tailored approach to change that addresses both the strengths and weaknesses of each library site:

Fundamentally the problem with these options is they are trying to cut too much from the service; over 50% (South Friern)

The library service works as a system not as separate individual branches. The book stock is one collection and if you halve the floorspace and halve the book stock then there will be less for everyone, even in the branches which stay the same size (Golders Green)

They should come up with better options; they haven't actually gone into the libraries and seen 'what is the best option for each of them?' They need to go back to the drawing board (North Finchley)

We need to ask 'how can we serve people's needs?' We need to identify needs in each area and decide how to respond. Small libraries might work for people who read for distraction, but larger libraries work better where a more in-depth service is sought. (Mobile)

- 17.50 At Burnt Oak, reducing the number of days on which libraries are open was suggested:

Why not go to five or four days per week opening to fund the difference? (Mill Hill)

- 17.51 Attendees at Mill Hill suggested that each library in the borough could develop a specialism, for example 'a branch like Mill Hill with a very young population could specialise in children's activities'.

- 17.52 East Finchley attendees questioned whether the work of other boroughs around library services had been taken into consideration by LBB when formulating its options (the Idea Stores in other areas of London were one noted development in this area). In fact, closer collaboration with other boroughs was considered desirable in eliminating duplication and making efficiencies without widespread 'cuts' to services:

Did they reference examples of what other boroughs are doing? For example Idea Stores etc. (East Finchley)

Did the Council find out how other councils like Enfield were approaching the same problem? (Osidge)

We need to think about the gap differently. We all spend money on things we barely use. Sharing and collaborative economy is growing in London; if this becomes more widespread then we don't need to cut services. (Colindale/Grahame Park)

- 17.53 Finally, very many attendees across several sessions said they would be prepared to pay more Council Tax if it meant fewer reductions to the library service in future:

Raise council tax by the full 2% allowable (Mill Hill)

Offer the choice to local people: "if you want good library services then you need to pay for it" (Mill Hill)

Keep libraries the same but fund the gap from council tax (Burnt Oak)

Revisit the council tax freeze (East Finchley)

Increasing the council tax to 1.9% would have generated £38 million; instead the council tax was cut by 1% (Chipping Barnet)

We know they have less money but there are other choices they could make for saving £2.85m. For example council tax has been frozen, it could be raised (Hendon)

If money really is the issue then we must do something about council tax (Golders Green)

The shortfall should be met by putting up council tax to cover it (South Friern)

If they say 1% on council tax raises £1m, then we could solve this with a 2.8% rise (East Barnet)

I'd happily pay for a service with no cuts or pay more council tax (Mobile)

However, it was also said that: *“during a recession incomes are already squeezed; people don't want an increase in tax. People will opt for the least increase in council tax. The majority of people instinctively don't want a tax increase”.* (Chipping Barnet)

Other issues raised – benefits of the library service

^{17.54} Several people along the mobile library route spoke about libraries' heritage and the need to preserve them and their traditions:

I'm proud of the heritage of libraries; they are places to go to educate yourself. There are some key people who have cited the role of libraries in their early education (Mobile)

Libraries should be a priority for the Council...they are important for youth. I grew up with them and now, as a parent, I want to introduce my children to them (Mobile)

I like the tradition of the library. I've been a library user since my childhood and am now introducing my own children to them. (Mobile)

^{17.55} The potential for social isolation (and its associated financial costs and negative health impacts) as a result of library closures or size reductions was noted at most drop-in sessions: in particular, many comments were made about their benefits as a meeting place for older and other vulnerable people and in offering migrant residents opportunities to learn English and integrate into the local community. Here are some of the very many typical comments:

Closing libraries will create knock-on effects and lead to increased costs...for example dealing with the cost of isolation (Mill Hill)

Libraries make a big difference to preventing isolation yet they are not recognised for this (East Barnet)

The hidden benefits of libraries are not reflected in the rationale of the library strategy...community connectedness, preventing loneliness etc. Also social mobility, social interactions. One councillor even said 'that's not what libraries do' yet Age UK told us the Council had agreed with them that this was what libraries were for (East Barnet)

Barnet have done loads of good, intelligent work on social isolation, but they should have made the link between libraries and the services to tackle isolation (South Friern)

The library is such a community thing. I want the libraries to stay as they are (Mobile)

There used to be a coffee morning here on a Monday morning, it was an opportunity for vulnerable people to meet and make friends. There is also a book group. Everything is being cut, this leads to depression and even the money is being cut on that (Chipping Barnet)

Older people having a bad day will just stay in if they can't go to the library and this leads to social isolation (Chipping Barnet)

Coffee mornings for over 65s are similar...helping people who would otherwise be isolated (Burnt Oak)

I'm out of work and it can be hard to get out, but it's comforting to go and find things out here, especially on days when you have got nothing on; it gets you out of the house. And if there wasn't this just five minutes away I probably wouldn't go (Golders Green)

The library is more than a place to borrow books: it is a 'community hub' where many people are able to socialise and to gain access to facilities that they may not have at home... (Childs Hill)

They are not looking at it holistically; there are lots of old people. They get isolated then they have to use social services and home care (North Finchley)

When I moved here 20 years ago I met people at Rhyme Time who I am still good friends with. It helped me build my connections in the area (East Barnet)

The options paper and survey miss out the social impacts of the library service especially: reducing isolation; support for families; and the integration of non-English speaking families (Osidge)

There is a changing demographic makeup and population growth within the community, suggesting that this would lead people to be more dependent on the library than ever. In a multicultural community the library serves as a good way for communities to integrate (Childs Hill)

When I moved here two years ago this library was a lifeline as a mum with a young child, in terms of establishing a network and meeting people in the area. Another mother who comes here is Japanese and she comes here so her toddler can learn English. (South Friern)

^{17.56} The wider role of libraries (in promoting literacy and e-literacy skills, offering spaces for learning and activities, providing facilities for residents that cannot access them elsewhere and encouraging social mobility) was also thought to have been forgotten within the options paper rationale – and people strongly urged LBB to consider its responsibilities to the public in terms of fostering literacy and preserving cultural identity:

The options paper presumes libraries are simply 'vending machines for books' (Hendon)

The options paper does not recognise the role of libraries as a meeting space and the role staff play in helping children do homework. It's not just about books (East Finchley)

The rationale underplays the role of libraries in education and in enabling social mobility, which the Government say are their priorities (Golders Green)

Libraries are changing; they are not just about books, are about internet for those who don't have at home, and for children's activities (Mill Hill)

It's scary if usage is just based on the number of books being taken out. They need to look at table usage just before exams and dissertations are due in; the library is packed (Chipping Barnet)

I'm worried about the impact on jobseekers. I have been helping people who have had sanctions imposed by Job Centre Plus and have been told to download certain forms and the library is the only place they can do that for free (Hendon)

I've used this library for 30 years and it has enabled me to become a writer. It would not be possible without this place (Edgware)

They need to look after the well-being of the community. We need to be able to read, literacy and culture are important... (Chipping Barnet)

Libraries should be seen as part of the education service because that's what they are really about (East Barnet)

Many parents cannot afford books so libraries are the key to education; but they are not recognised as such (East Barnet)

Children aren't going to learn about books unless they're part of the library. In my opinion, we are denying the purpose of libraries (Church End)

What are kids that can't do homework at home going to do? Also, what is going to happen to the reference library? The reference library is great for students (Church End)

If we want people to strive it doesn't make sense to take away the only community hub (Childs Hill)

The Government are prioritising literacy in schools and libraries are all about supporting literacy but the options don't reflect this direct link so it's not joined up here (Osidge)

The link to education is just not apparent in the options paper. It should look more at: early years; literacy for school-age children; inter-relationships between library cuts and Children's Centre cuts to early years activities (Osidge)

As a parent, one sees both the mobile and physical libraries as providing an important source of experience in developing children's appreciation of knowledge and reading. (Mobile)

It was also said that: *"none of these options refer to the core principles of libraries which are; to be a source of reference information for the community, to propagate the written word". (Hendon)*

^{17.57} Essentially, it was said that the role of libraries cannot be taken in isolation and that they must be considered in the context of the benefits they bring to other services – and that the loss of much of what is considered a very valuable service (especially for the most disadvantaged members of the community) cannot be justified by the 'pittance' any changes will save:

The Council's instincts are to think about the 80% of the population who can look after themselves, but the role of local public services is really to support the 20% who cannot look after themselves (South Friern)

If Barnet Council decimates its library service and severs access to books, it will, in the end, also decimate the spirit of its people. And not just any people, but its weakest members (Golders Green)

Libraries cannot be discussed in isolation; they need to be discussed in the context of everything else... (Chipping Barnet)

For some mothers things like Rhyme Time are preventing postnatal depression, which in turn is reducing costs for the NHS (Burnt Oak)

Library services are not competing with other Children's and Families services, they are enhancing those (East Finchley)

They need to think differently; this library will save money for the Council, children come here and mix from different schools and that saves money because it prevents negative behaviour (East Finchley)

The savings you make are less than the losses which will accrue over time (lower skills, lower literacy, fewer opportunities) (Edgware)

£2.85m is such a pittance in the overall scheme of things (Osidge)

£1.69 per visit is such a small amount to try to save...especially when the impact and economic value has been estimated at £25 per visit (MLA figures). (South Friern)

Other issues raised – Church End and Colindale

^{17.58} Several people questioned why LBB is spending money on new libraries at Church End and Colindale if we are trying to find savings:

The cost of refurbishment and remodelling will be significant; use those resources instead to keep services open. (Mill Hill)

Why re-build? We should simply refurbish this one. But if it is redeveloped very concerned that this might close before the new one is up and running – or worry it may not be delivered as promised (Colindale/Grahame Park)

If there is a budget crunch then use the money from re-building on running the service instead (Edgware)

Why rebuild Grahame Park? Why use the money for redevelopment (instead of existing library) and why in Colindale not on Graham Park – also where will it be, is there a site yet? (Golders Green)

Why not prioritise funding for keeping libraries open and make the savings from the refurbishment/rebuild budgets of Church End and Colindale? (South Friern)

Other issues raised – future improvements

^{17.59} Whatever future route is taken, there was a sense that libraries must be modernised to attract users. For example, the ICT network was considered inadequate and in need of improvement (and people questioned whether the cost of doing this has been taken into account by LBB):

Libraries could do more; they need to catch-up and do things to attract different users... They are one of the few public spaces that people can go to for free so they should have nice loos, perhaps soft play areas. Think about what people want, when. For example, Hendon has café but is it open at times when people want it, like at the weekend? (Mobile)

Will the IT network be improved as part of these proposals and how has the cost of upgrading IT been taken into account? (Burnt Oak)

The computer network is creaking. Bandwidth is insufficient, PCs are crammed with bloatware, it is costing and wasting staff time responding to all the problems (Burnt Oak)

ICT here is ridiculous. It often doesn't work and your free 30 minutes goes quickly when the PC you are using is slow or takes ages to log-in (Edgware)

The ICT is so important for study and yet it is such poor quality. For some libraries this is more important than how good the books are (Golders Green)

The computers are always out of order; for jobseekers this means they cannot search for jobs. (Hendon)

- ^{17.60} It was also said that, should libraries indeed reduce in size, LBB should expand its inter-library reservation and loans scheme (which must, it was felt, be free of charge) - and possibly join the London Libraries Reciprocal Scheme to allow readers to borrow books from other Boroughs:

Assuming each branch and the service overall will have smaller collections, will reservations and inter-library loans be free? (Edgware)

Having smaller libraries seems to rest on the ability to move stock around quickly, but would this be a free service or charged? (Mobile)

If we went down these routes would Barnet join the London libraries reciprocal scheme so that we could access books from other boroughs? (Edgware)

- ^{17.61} Also in terms of improvements, Child's Hill library currently lacks a public toilet, meaning that certain organisations (for example Eclipse Barnet, an organisation aiming to prevent mental health issues) have been unable to hire space within the library for their own events. One participant suggested that this was one of many ways in which changes to the library service could have a wider impact on the wellbeing of the community.

Other issues raised – consultation and options development process

- ^{17.62} There was a great deal of mistrust in the both the consultation process and the regard decision-makers will pay to its outcomes - in many cases based on what people considered to be broken promises previously:

They want one result and they will not publish the consultation results (East Finchley)

If there is no interest in the results of this process then what is the point? (East Barnet)

There is a real suspicion the Council will use the survey to push people into accepting one of their options rather than alternatives (East Barnet)

Barnet don't listen to consultation. They have already made their minds up. This is nonsense (Edgware)

Will the results for this even be looked at by the Council? (Church End)

I think that the Council will use the stats to say what they want them to say (Church End)

We don't trust politicians to keep their word [about what will happen to libraries]. It seems similar to the Edgware Hospital decisions. People disagreed strongly and were told there would be a hospital but it is a very inadequate Community Hospital. (Burnt Oak)

There is distrust of this kind of process because of other things which have happened, for example the issues surrounding Pinkham Way (South Friern)

The way the Council does its business...things often just don't happen. Some of this can be seen in the history of the library service itself. (South Friern)

- 17.63 There was a strong sense that the 'options exercise' is a missed opportunity to create a way forward with the community, show the potential benefits of change and ask for assistance in achieving it:

It does not feel like these three options have been developed in consultation with residents. Why did this process not start with the £2.85 million savings target and before getting to the options say to the public 'what should we do and what do you value?' Wolverhampton did this and it meant the focus was on defining what people meant by the concept of a library and on how the public could help. Barnet seem to have started at the end of that process with fully determined propositions and are now asking for help to run them (South Friern)

I'm not arguing with the reality of needing to make savings, but I do object to the process of not putting the bigger question (how can we make these savings?) to the public. (South Friern)

Indeed, there was a definite sense that there would be value moving forward in greater collaboration between the Council and its communities in determining an acceptable future model for the Library Service:

There is a real issue but it is that we need libraries to position themselves differently. Culture has to change; we need to get people together and address these issues together and find out what is possible, not just keep the status quo (South Friern)

Both the council and the community are missing a trick. We should be looking at all the ways to attract money; library staff should be engaging with the community on this (South Friern)

People across the borough have ideas and we should engage with these to find better options and solutions. (East Barnet)

- 17.64 In terms of practicalities, timetabling some of the drop-in session during the week and during the day was thought to disadvantage certain members of the community. Some residents also alleged that the meetings about the libraries scheduled for closure were at particularly 'awkward' times:

Who chose these timings? Daytime is really bad for anyone who works. I had to use up annual leave to be here. (Golders Green)

- 17.65 It was also considered essential that ALL sections of society were included in the consultation (especially non-users, staff, under 18s and minority communities). These groups were, of course, included in the process, suggesting a lack of knowledge of the consultation as a whole.

- 17.66 The consultation document and questionnaire were heavily criticised by drop-in attendees. The questionnaire in particular was thought to be leading, over-complicated and off-putting (deliberately so to engineer the 'desired' result according to some):

The survey is designed to deter people from completing it...it's too complicated (East Finchley)

I did fill in the questionnaire online; it took one hour as it is a very cumbersome thing. It felt almost like they want to wear you down. It didn't feel the survey authors were really interested in my answers. I felt railroaded. The space to write about alternatives only came at the end of all that, if you hadn't collapsed on the floor by then! (Osidge)

The survey is too long; it puts people off (Golders Green)

These documents are absolute nonsense in terms of people being able to understand and response to the options (South Friern)

The options paper and questionnaire could be a lot simpler - and what if you don't like any of the options? (South Friern)

This questionnaire is badly flawed - not independently produced, produced by those who want to take a particular decision (South Friern)

I don't agree with the legitimacy and the length of the consultation. I consider this to be illegal and deliberately misleading. There are questions in the questionnaire that are trying to lead you... (North Finchley)

- 17.67 Attendees strongly desired more detail about the three options; they were frustrated with the unclear criteria underpinning them and with not being able to see what they considered to be essential data to allow an informed judgement. They particularly desired further knowledge of: costs (both for the library service overall and per library branch); library usage and income generation overall, by branch and by user type; the mix of services that would be provided within the proposed smaller libraries; the financial implications of the three proposed options; how the options were chosen:

It's difficult to engage with the proposals without more detail (Childs Hill)

There isn't enough information to be able to make an informed decision (Chipping Barnet)

There should be way more detail in this consultation document. It's too airy fairy for me (Church End)

I would like to see more on the costs overall and on costs per branch (East Barnet)

We need to see data per branch - costs, revenue earned, wages, staffing - before we can give an informed view (Edgware)

Has the Council looked at each element of the service and done any cost/benefit analysis - for instance of book-lending, or public PCs or children's activities? (East Barnet)

Do the proposals take account of usage, i.e. the number of visits in terms of which libraries are affected? (Golders Green)

What is the profile of users currently? Their demographics, levels of need? (Edgware)

It is very hard to respond to the options without knowing what the mix of services will be in the 540 foot option. For example, PCs are very well used, but how many would you fit into 540 feet? Would it be enough for local needs? (East Barnet)

I would like to see the data on the value of each library site (East Barnet)

I'd need to know what the savings are going to be from each option (Church End)

Without seeing more on the numbers I cannot understand how these options are financially equivalent (South Friern)

I would like to see these options explained in terms of the total income and spending of the Council as a whole... (Osidge)

Just not enough information on how these options meet the £2.85m gap (South Friern)

I want to know more about why the choices are what they are: what were the criteria? How were they applied? How was each factor weighted? (Osidge)

What is the current income breakdown? How does it compare to other parts of the country where libraries bring in significant income? (Burnt Oak)

^{17.68} Finally, it was said that further consultation will be necessary if the chosen option is indeed, as specified in the consultation document, a mixture of Options One, Two and Three:

If the option which gets taken forward is a mixture of One, Two and Three then by definition it will be one we haven’t been consulted on. (Hendon)

18. Written Submissions

Introduction

- 18.1 During the formal consultation process, numerous written submissions were received from Barnet residents (including many children and young people), community groups, schools and political stakeholders.
- 18.2 ORS has logged and filed all the submissions it received, and after separating duplicate submissions and administrative queries not directly related to the consultation, 68 valid and unique submissions were identified. This is in addition to 114 received from local schoolchildren – seemingly as part of an organised school-based activity (these have been reported later in this chapter). The table below shows the breakdown of contributors by type.

Figure 9091: Summary of Written Submissions Received

Individual resident submissions (49)	
Adults (44 submissions)	
Children (5 submissions)	
Political stakeholders (8)	
Theresa Villiers (MP)	Lord Monroe Palmer of Child’s Hill (2)
Councillor Sury Kathri (2)	Lady Suzette Palmer (3)
Community groups (8)	
Barnet Choral Society	Mill Hill Preservation Society
CLAN Residents’ Association	Mill Hill Residents Association
East Finchley Library Users Group	The Research Practice
Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum (2)	
Schools (3)	
Goodwyn School	Oak Lodge School
Martin Primary School	

- 18.3 ORS has read all the written submissions and reported them in this chapter, with some detailed summaries also provided; none have been disregarded even if they are not expressed in a “formal” way. It is a painstaking but necessary process to identify the main themes and issues raised by respondents.
- 18.4 All submissions have also been reviewed by the Council; meaning that any submissions that require more detailed consideration have been evaluated by suitable members of LBB staff.
- 18.5 Submissions were initially classified on the basis of the type of individual or organisation submitting the response. They were then read in their entirety and the key themes and issues raised were collated, classified and reported using a standardised code frame. This will ensure that LBB is able to consider important issues identified.

- 18.6 Most submissions have been reviewed in a thematic, summary (tabular) format in order to identify the range of views and issues as well as common themes. The tables are organised around the following main issues:
- » The benefits of local libraries
 - » The expected impact of LBB’s proposed changes to the library service
 - » The Council’s three proposed options (including common features of all three)
 - » The consultation process
 - » Other issues.
- 18.7 In addition, some contributions have been highlighted as significant - most notably as they make specific alternative suggestions for consideration - and have been summarised in detail to make the sometimes lengthy documents accessible to the public generally and to highlight their main arguments and any alternative proposals.
- 18.8 Finally, it is important to note that the following section is a report of the views expressed by submission contributors. In some cases, these views will not be supported by the available evidence – and while ORS has not sought to highlight or correct those that make incorrect statements or assumptions, this should be borne in mind when considering the submissions.

Main Themes Raised in Written Submissions

The benefits of local libraries

- 18.9 Many comments were made in support of local libraries, which were described as valued resources that offer residents focal points in their communities. They were also considered to be: socially accessible to - and well-used by - all members of the community (and particularly more disadvantaged residents); and essential in preventing social isolation, aiding integration and fostering education and learning.
- 18.10 As reported below, these comments were made in relation to libraries more generally as well as to specific libraries across Barnet.

Figure 92: Summary of comments about the benefits of local libraries

Theme	Sub theme and details
General comments relevant to multiple library locations	<u>General supportive comments</u>
	Don’t mess with the library service to suit the Council – mess with it to suit the users or don’t mess with it at all – it’s pretty damn good as it is! (Resident)
	The public library is a unifying force in our fragmented world. It broadens our knowledge of all aspects of life and thought; and by acquainting us with English culture, enables us to appreciate the decent, generous society that allows all our groups our individual freedoms and rights... (Resident)
	Libraries are not to be tampered with, but represent an essential service and focal point in the community and must be preserved intact. (Resident)
	<u>Socially accessible to (and well-used) by the whole community</u>
[Libraries] make a helpful contribution to [social mobility, for example by providing a quiet	

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p>place for children and young people to study, even if their home life is disrupted. (Theresa Villiers MP)</p> <p>All kinds of people find the local library irreplaceable. The local library provides a quiet place of study for secondary school students coming from crowded, noisy homes. The library provides students with resources of all kinds, including electronic, but especially including the invaluable guidance of librarians. The library provides an entry point for new immigrants, in which they can start to find their way into their new culture... The library provides books and computers, and technical know-how, for people otherwise too poor, and often elderly, to have access to either. The library provides primary school children with books to suit their interests and ability, encouraging them to learn independently and to broaden their knowledge of the world... (Resident)</p> <p>A full public library service is essential for a civilised society in which all residents have an equal opportunity to access the cultural and educational resources of a public library and it is shameful that Barnet's present administration is proposing to deprive residents of the existing facilities. Parts of the community would also be deprived of important community facilities if any of the options is allowed to proceed. (Resident)</p> <p>Libraries are an integral part of the community and are especially appreciated by young mothers with children and older, isolated adults. (Resident)</p> <p>Libraries are a part of civilisation. They give access to books, computers, children’s and adult activities and affect the whole community in a way few other Council Services do. (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p> <p>They are places to study, to read, to apply for jobs, to have social interaction and even, for some, a place to stay warm in the winter. They are centres for self-improvement. They are part of a thriving community. (Resident)</p> <p>It is not just access to the books and services which is appreciated by the public. People also greatly value the library buildings as community spaces which can support a wider network of local activities and meetings. (Theresa Villiers MP)</p> <p>My understanding from the feedback my constituents have given me is that libraries are a popular resource for a very wide range of people from across our diverse borough, including our minority ethnic communities. Many older people place great importance not just on library services, but on the opportunity for social interaction a visit to the library can offer. (Theresa Villiers MP)</p> <p><u>Benefits to ‘disadvantaged’ sectors of the community</u></p> <p>Libraries are particularly valuable to the more deprived parts of the Borough especially for children’s education and access to computers as well as reading... (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p> <p><u>Education and learning</u></p> <p>[Libraries] provide invaluable educational and learning opportunities for people of all ages. (Theresa Villiers MP)</p> <p>Many of us senior citizens are extremely concerned as to the proposed library cuts, not only for ourselves but for young children and students who will suffer from a deleted</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p>service. (Resident)</p> <p>On a practical level, libraries provide an invaluable source of information, knowledge and culture for people of all ages. Books cannot be replaced by the electronic media, useful as these are... (Resident)</p> <p><u>Offer important range of books</u></p> <p>Libraries give all visitors the opportunity to browse, looking at books they would not normally read, and finding unexpected areas of interest in them. Books can be perused at length in the library, without cost, and without an unfriendly glance from a justifiably resentful bookseller. The absence of commercial imperatives enables libraries to stock a deeper and more serious kind of book than a bookshop; to include reference books, books on politics, science and philosophy, books on art, poetry and music that major non-specialist bookshops no longer have. And libraries form a network in which books can be acquired on loan from other libraries, as asked for by members of the public. (Resident)</p>
<p>Specific to East Finchley Library</p>	<p><u>Prevents social isolation (and aids integration)</u></p> <p>The library has been my salvation. Having arrived in East Finchley some ten years ago, it was my first point of call to find out what's on and where – an essential information provider. I met new friends here and have continued to enjoy the library and all that it provides. (Resident)</p> <p>I recently attended a Health and Wellbeing Board meeting, where they were discussing how to keep the elderly well, warm and free from dementia. Well, an easy answer. Keep their local library open. Somewhere for them to go, meet their friends, read books, newspapers, look at maps all in a warm and comfortable place... (Resident)</p> <p><u>Benefits for Children and Young People</u></p> <p>My children have also gained so much attending the library, it's priceless! From the very popular Baby Rhyme time sessions; Story Explorers provided a fun storytelling and craft sessions; the summertime holiday reading challenge, a great incentive to encourage children to keep reading; learning to knit and crochet which they enjoyed immensely; to Kumon sessions to help them with their maths. But above all, to watch them become confident, avid readers and develop a great enthusiasm and enjoyment of books. It is a wonderful thing when they find a book they can't stop reading! (Resident)</p> <p>As a former Barnet supply teacher I know how much the local schools: Holy Trinity and Martin, value the library. The children I taught loved their visits to the library. (Resident)</p> <p>It is used by local schools and must be of great advantage in young people's education. (Resident)</p> <p>Our children and our parents are key users of the library and highly value the services that they provide... All of the three proposals being consulted upon would be detrimental to our children and parents. The library and the range of services it does provide, and potentially could provide, which go well beyond just book lending, underpin and enrich the education of our children. The thirst of our children to learn is enhanced by their experience, knowledge and love of East Finchley library. (Martin Primary School)</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p>I can sit down in a cosy corner and peacefully read my book without the noises I have at home. I can learn new facts and meet friends from different schools. (Young Resident)</p> <p>I really love reading different books and in the library I found out my favourite authors... In the summer holidays I did a reading challenge called Storylab. I really enjoyed it. I read 15 books! (Young Resident)</p> <p><u>Benefits for 'disadvantaged' children and young people</u></p> <p>Our students access the library weekly and the opportunities it provides for them are endless. Weekly visits allow the students to develop not only their literacy levels but also provide them with chances to practice accessing the community. Many of our young people need to reinforce social skills in different environments, for years we have used the East Finchley Library to do this. (Oak Lodge School)</p> <p>The library has supported opportunities for our older students to undertake work experience, where they have learnt important employability skills that have helped them to succeed when entering the work force. (Oak Lodge School)</p> <p>For many of our families supporting their child to access the community can be difficult, by the school and the local library working together to create these opportunities young people who may not have had the chance are now able to access their local community. (Oak Lodge School)</p> <p>We hope that when you are considering the future of East Finchley Library you reflect upon the learning that would be lost to local disadvantaged young people and their families. (Oak Lodge School)</p> <p>It is next to Martins Primary School which take classes there regularly, and Oak Lodge Special School which does the same. Pupils with disabilities need a library nearby, not a bus ride away (Resident)</p> <p>The library is vital to children who come from homes in which there are no books or where English is not the first language. The computer room is a vital asset for study and for information for teenagers and others who do not have access to a computer at home. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Accessibility</u></p> <p>The location of the library at the heart of East Finchley, straddling social and private housing means it is accessible to all in our community. (Martin Primary School)</p> <p>One of the reasons we attend our local library so often is because it is possible to take them into the library easily without involving a long journey. (Resident)</p> <p>I love my library because when I finish school I don't have to travel by car. I can walk! (Young Resident)</p>
<p>Specific to Childs Hill Library</p>	<p><u>Socially accessible to (and well used by) all sectors of the community</u></p> <p>It provides rooms for hire where local groups can meet; it is an access point for the mobile library service; and it stocks newspapers, periodicals and large print books as well as audio books. (Clan Residents' Association)</p> <p>My own local library of Childs Hill serves a community as well as a literary need for a ward</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p>just about as far from NLBP as it can get. (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p> <p>We urge Barnet Council to maintain Childs Hill Library so that it continues to provide its current level of community service. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Community ‘hub’</u></p> <p>The past few years have seen the stripping away of all the other community assets in our area (reference made to the local Post Office, the community centre on the Granville Road Estate and the Castle Pub)... Our Library is the last remaining community asset in Childs Hill. As such local residents feel it is vital to retain it as a focus for local community activity, the provision of information to the Childs Hill community and, of course, to provide the vital educational and recreational functions of a library. (Clan Residents’ Association)</p> <p><u>Prevents social isolation (and aids integration)</u></p> <p>It acts as an information centre and route to learning English for the many immigrants who now live in the area. (CLAN Residents’ Association)</p> <p><u>Benefits for families, children and young people</u></p> <p>It provides a meeting place for several local mother and toddler groups; and the children of all three local primary schools can use its facilities to access books, computers and so on outside school hours. (Clan Residents’ Association)</p> <p><u>Benefits for ‘disadvantaged’ families, children and young people</u></p> <p>Its computers provide internet access to local families who have none at home. They are frequently used, especially by residents of the Granville Road Estate and Longberries. (CLAN Residents’ Association)</p> <p><u>Growing population</u></p> <p>Our part of the Borough is densely populated and becoming ever more so. Use of the Library is therefore likely to rise substantially in the future and to cut its service now would be a grave loss to the area, both immediately and ever more so over the coming years. (CLAN Residents’ Association)</p> <p>Should the building scheme for Granville Road go ahead there will, of course be an even greater need for a community library and it seems very likely since the local primaries are over-subscribed that there will be a new school as well. (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p>
<p>Specific to Mill Hill Library</p>	<p><u>Socially accessible to (and well used by) all sectors of the community</u></p> <p>Libraries...can also be a special place for families to visit and read many exciting and interesting books and stories, enabling them to bond with their children. Older people and those who are less fortunate or possibly homeless also find it a welcoming and safe place to visit. (Goodwyn School)</p> <p>Already stated on behalf of Mill Hill Library are the mothers with their pre nursery and young children, students and computer users, coffee mornings for older members, and the talks that are given from time to time. (Resident)</p> <p>I see all the activities advertised in the library and it is so essential to the community to have these activities available for all the various groups they serve... I realise the council</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p>have funding issues, but to tear out this essential community resource from the heart of our area is not the answer. I am sure several groups, especially the elderly and disabled and young mothers coping with small children will become increasingly isolated without having this freely available resource so conveniently sited... (Resident)</p> <p>Libraries are fantastic places which numerous people visit on a daily basis to research information and borrow an enormous variety of books... (Goodwyn School)</p> <p>I understand that there is a proposal to close the Library in Mill Hill. My grandchildren use this library at least once a week and I would like to petition Barnet Council to keep this library open. (Resident)</p> <p>The library is well used by all age groups and abilities for numerous uses. The computers are well used... The photocopying service is well used and I personally love the information I can obtain from the numerous notice boards about all sorts of activities. (Resident)</p> <p>I was very disappointed to hear that the library in Mill Hill may be closing. Personally my family uses the library very regularly, and it has been particularly important for my primary school age children to be able to browse and chose books, both fiction and non-fiction. We also read in the library. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Benefits for 'disadvantaged' members of the community</u></p> <p>Surely you would agree that those who do not have access to the internet at home should be able to access it at their local library? (Goodwyn School)</p>
<p>Specific to Osidge Library</p>	<p><u>Socially accessible to (and well used by) all sectors of the community</u></p> <p>I use my local library in Osidge Lane a fair bit and I would be devastated if anything were to happen to it. Whenever I go, it always seems busy with students using the upstairs reference area for study, pensioners reading the papers and children occupied in their section. This is also the contact point for the police and local councillors, plus book clubs and special events. It is a vibrant little library... (Resident)</p> <p>Please do what you can to keep our libraries - they are one of the very rare meeting points for all ages and backgrounds. (Resident)</p>
<p>Specific to South Friern Library</p>	<p><u>Socially accessible to (and well used by) all sectors of the community</u></p> <p>I live adjacent and use the library frequently, and am aware of how many other people use it too. As an ex Early Years teacher it brightens my heart to see families with young children and toddlers using this resource for the entertainment and education of young children. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Benefits for children and young people</u></p> <p>The secondary school children [use] the library every summer to revise and do their homework in a quiet environment. (Resident)</p> <p>It is a positive place for teenagers to go, there have been problems around this area with anti-social behaviour partly due to a lack of free constructive things for that age group, so please help to prevent the one good thing for teenagers being taken away. (Resident)</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p><u>Benefits for older people</u></p> <p>There are significant numbers of older people who use the library as an outing to go somewhere warm, which is not costly, and as a social hub. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Benefits for ‘disadvantaged’ members of the community</u></p> <p>This resource is available to the people of this community regardless of their wealth... I see plenty of people using the computers, again allowing people with challenged backgrounds access to IT in a way that is likely to improve their life chances. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Community ‘hub’</u></p> <p>This is a local community centre in the best sense. It performs diverse and irreplaceable functions. The proposed use of the Arts depot will not fulfil these roles, being both inconvenient and an expense to get to. (Resident)</p>
Specific to North Finchley Library	<p><u>Benefits for children and young people</u></p> <p>I have been here since I was very small and I don't want it to close or I will be heartbroken. This library helps me learn to read, relax and it is quiet! So please don't shut it down! (Young Resident)</p> <p>Libraries are so important for children. They help us learn and discover new things. For example, just the other day I had a test that I needed to revise for, and where did I get my books for revision, well the library of course. (Young Resident)</p> <p><u>Benefits for ‘disadvantaged’ children and young people</u></p> <p>As well as the library being important to children, it is also important for the whole borough. If someone doesn't have enough money to afford the right books and films a library is the perfect place to go! (Young Resident)</p>
Specific to Edgware Library	<p><u>Education and learning</u></p> <p>I have been an Edgware resident all my life, and Edgware Library in particular has been an instrumental force in my education, resulting in me going to Durham University to study English Literature. I am now a soon-to-be published author... (Resident)</p>

The expected impact of LBB’s proposed changes to the library service

^{18.11} Several respondents expressed concern about the potential loss of some local libraries and their associated staff (as well as the size reductions proposed, particularly under Option One). Their main worries were that: whole communities will lose valued local resources; the distance and poor accessibility to alternative libraries, especially by public transport, may be prohibitive for many residents; social isolation and its associated problems will increase; experienced and well-regarded staff will lose their jobs; and that libraries are needed to cater for the area’s growing population.

Figure 9394: Summary of comments concerning the expected negative impact of closing-down local libraries

Theme	Sub theme and details
General comments relevant to multiple library locations	<p><u>General comments</u></p> <p>Please, please leave us our one decent community amenity, the library service. I would be lost without it. I am a senior citizen and belong to a book club. We do not want any diminishing of the library service in the Borough of Barnet. (Resident)</p> <p>The preservation of libraries is something I feel passionately about... (Resident)</p> <p>The public library is one of the last remaining civilising influences in an increasingly fragmented, uncivilised and dangerous world... Where libraries are enlightening, humanising places of study and contemplation, other public arenas have become increasingly shrill, shallow, cruel and ignorant. We should not complain of violence, crime, and hatred if we destroy the centres of our civic life. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Size reduction and reduction in staffed hours</u></p> <p>I am appalled to hear of the council’s plans to severely reduce both the size and the opening hours of our invaluable libraries. To be useful, a public library has to be well stocked with a wide variety of books and other resources. Therefore, to severely reduce the size of a public library, and to restrict its opening times, is to render it almost useless. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Distance to alternative libraries</u></p> <p>Distance matters a great deal to mums - or dads - with young children in tow. (Resident)</p>
Specific to East Finchley Library	<p><u>Loss to the community as a whole</u></p> <p>Are we, as a local community, to lose all of this? There will be so many children and adults who will miss out on the opportunity to benefit from what a library can provide. (Resident)</p> <p>You must not consider selling or closing our existing public library which serves a large population of all ages and includes several schools and used to provide a haven for study in the upstairs area of East Finchley Library for students or other residents who needed some space and quiet for study or personal tasks. (Resident)</p> <p>It will be a tragedy if the local community loses such a valuable service. This will change the shape of learning and education for now and generations to come. (Resident)</p> <p>Surely a scenario where a public building such as the library remains a focal point to the local residents is a value that mustn’t be squandered. (Resident)</p> <p>The East Finchley Library, besides being a Grade 2 Listed Building, and, we consider, the finest building in Finchley, is the ONLY community amenity that ALL the people in East Finchley have access to. It is particularly valued by the local children from pre-school age and by the older people in our community. (Resident)</p> <p>East Finchley Library is the unique hub of the community with its notice boards, meetings and councillor’s surgeries, none of which can be replaced elsewhere. (Resident)</p> <p>Once destroyed the library is irreplaceable, there is no comparable space or institution in the neighbourhood... We cannot guess what the future needs of our communities will be. Forty years ago no-one could have anticipated the need for the heavily used computer room in the library. (Resident)</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p>For the sake of future families...and retired pensioners who use the library on a regular basis, I appeal to you...to reject any proposals to close East Finchley Library. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Loss to children and young people</u></p> <p>Should our library be forced to close then my children will be among the many who will miss out on accessing any library facility. (Resident)</p> <p>There will be an increasing demand for the library from students attending The Archer Academy. My children attend Martin Primary School which is increasing in size with an additional 200+ children. Oak Lodge students attend on a regular basis. Children attending Holy Trinity, Fortismere and many other schools in the area will be affected too. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Loss of experienced and well-regarded staff</u></p> <p>During our visits we have been looked after by professional librarians, whom my children recognise and look forward to seeing. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Poor accessibility to other libraries</u></p> <p>Everyone does not have a car to transport themselves and the buses are not very frequent... (Resident)</p>
<p>Specific to Child’s Hill Library</p>	<p><u>Loss to the community as a whole</u></p> <p>The 3 options given will not make things better for the local residents especially the disabled people with poor mobility...elderly and young families with children who attend the nearby All Saints Primary School. (Resident)</p> <p>I have lived in Child’s Hill for about 35 years, and one of its problems is that it has no proper heart where people can meet to discuss admin matters or problems. Most people will head to the library for discussions with MPs etc. (Resident)</p> <p>I fervently believe that the community in Childs Hill would be much weaker if the local library were to close or be drastically reduced in size. The library is not only ‘books’ although that is very important. It is also a hub for local people who are miles away from NLBP or Hendon Town Hall with poor cross borough transport. (Lord Palmer of Childs Hill)</p> <p><u>Loss to children and young people</u></p> <p>The idea of removing a facility that encourages children from the local church primary school next door to actually read a book...will contribute to poor literacy levels even more. (Resident)</p> <p>How can they even consider closing Childs Hill Library? It encourages school-children to use it to read (I so often see youngsters there after school!). Also, a marvellous meeting place for young mums and their little ones – organised games, songs...a rue Social Centre. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Loss to elderly people</u></p> <p>Pensioners will make a special visit on Saturday mornings to look at the expensive weekend papers, which also gives us an opportunity to socialise. I would greatly miss the library. (Resident)</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p><u>Loss of experienced and well-regarded staff</u></p> <p>When I'm in Childs Hill library I hear people being given all sorts of information or just being listened to by the staff. It makes them – and me – feel we are people. Does that matter? (Resident)</p> <p><u>Poor accessibility to other libraries</u></p> <p>It will be a struggle for us to get to Hendon or Golders Green Library... (Resident)</p> <p>It says that everyone should be able to access a library in 30 minutes by public transport – well, they wouldn't, and certainly not Hendon. I gave up using it because it was such a trek and such a long wait for the buses. (Resident)</p> <p>Libraries should be situated within reasonable walking distance, say 20 minutes...and if the suggestions for Childs Hill are anything to go by the idea that it would only be 30 minutes by bus from another library is very suspect... (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p> <p>I am not at all sure that Childs Hill residents would be within 30 minutes by public transport of a library, bearing in mind there is no direct bus route from Cricklewood Lane to Golders Green (Cricklewood being the poorest part of the ward and most likely to need it). (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p> <p>With regard to Option 2 the idea of getting small children to a library for the popular infant and children events if it meant a 30 minute public transport journey is horrific (and not so good for us older residents used to walking to our library either). Obviously it will mainly be the people at the lower end of the social scale who have to make journeys by public transport and who may not be able to access all the modern technology who will be the worst hit. (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p>
Specific to Mill Hill Library	<p><u>Loss to the community as a whole</u></p> <p>To close the library would be a tragedy not only for us but also for the local residents of Mill Hill. (Goodwyn School)</p> <p>We firmly believe that it would be the wrong decision to close the library because so many people of all ages rely so heavily upon it... (Goodwyn School)</p> <p><u>Will increase social isolation and associated problems</u></p> <p>I feel if this local wonderful facility is removed there will be increased isolation and mental health issues for a significant proportion of our community, which in the long run cost more. Having ready access to information on what is readily available locally is vital to so many and becomes a lifeline. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Loss of education and learning resource</u></p> <p>Everybody knows that education is essential and that books are at the heart of learning, so why would you deprive people of this? (Goodwyn School)</p> <p><u>Loss of experienced and well-regarded staff</u></p> <p>I thought I must write in support of our library at Mill Hill. I was shocked to read in the local paper it is under threat. The service that is provided by the library and its dedicated, kind, efficient and hard working staff is second to none. (Resident)</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p>I have been following a course and the staff have been second to none helping me obtain books for the course from all over the country. (Resident)</p> <p>People who work at the library will lose their jobs which will be catastrophic both for them and their families... (Goodwyn school)</p> <p><u>Poor accessibility to other libraries</u></p> <p>Your idea that a library should be available to residents within a 30 minute ride on public transport is questioned as frankly for many, because of very poor orbital routes across the Borough (East to West & West to East), it would be easier and more timely to travel into Central London. (Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum)</p> <p><u>Growing population</u></p> <p>The loss or reduction of Mill Hill Library and its services would be detrimental to our lives, the expected increase of population and the children accompanying this. (Resident)</p>

The Council’s three proposed options (including common features of all three)

- 18.12 Several respondents rejected all three of LBB’s proposed options, describing them as ‘unacceptable’, ‘unsatisfactory’, ‘restrictive’ and ‘unimaginative’. The general sense was that they display a lack of vision and that broader, more creative thinking is required for the Council to achieve its required savings target while safeguarding the library service as much as possible.
- 18.13 Closures were considered wholly unacceptable, as was the size reduction proposed under Options One and Three. The latter, it was felt, would result in: a very restricted number of books and computers; a lack of space for studying or simply relaxing; and a reduction in the number of activities held at library sites. Furthermore, in terms of reconfiguring space for other uses, one specific issue raised was that East Finchley Library is a listed building and participants were thus unsure how reconfiguration would be achievable in this context.
- 18.14 A couple of comments were made on Option 3: the use of volunteers was considered positive, but only alongside trained staff. Indeed, community-run libraries were certainly thought to ‘have their place’, but not on the scale proposed by LBB.
- 18.15 Though there was support for income generation and the co-location of libraries with other services, views on the open library model were more mixed. A couple of respondents felt it could be workable, though they sought reassurance on issues such as security and how people would obtain information if required - whereas others were concerned about: the (primarily older) people who require assistance from staff when using the library; the safety of users and library contents; and the fact young people would be excluded from using the service during unstaffed hours without a parent present.

Figure 95: The Council’s three proposed options (including common features of all three)

Theme	Sub theme and details
All options unacceptable	<p><u>All options unacceptable - general</u></p> <p>I have read the consultation paper and am unable to agree with any of the options suggested... (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p>We consider that the 3 options that the Council is consulting on are unacceptable. (Resident)</p> <p>I have read the various options under consideration but find all of them unsatisfactory. (Resident)</p> <p>I reject all three options put forward for consideration and consider that Barnet Council should at the very least maintain all existing library services as at present and at best improve them. (Resident)</p> <p><u>All options unacceptable – too restrictive and unimaginative</u></p> <p>The options on offer are too restricted; broader, more creative thinking is needed... The library services are an important part of cultural and educational life, and have the potential to develop in new ways; the direction of thinking should be about how to make better, smarter use of existing resources; including professional librarians. (Resident)</p> <p>The need to educate and integrate people as well as drive economic growth is paramount. Instead of decimating its existing service and making libraries inaccessible to large numbers of the local population, Barnet could choose to provide outstanding space. Its libraries can offer space for study, home working and community activities funded by a mixture of smart council activity and appropriate commercial activity - pop up shops, cafes, rooms for hire. Barnet has a number of grand library buildings that could be refurbished as great community centres and accelerators. Yet, the current proposals are lacking in imagination, focus on shrinking floor space (and presumably profitable sale of grand old buildings), render the service inaccessible (to suggest the elderly and primary school children travel 30 mins to a central service when they currently have libraries within walking distance), and offer no vision. (Resident)</p>
Use of volunteers	<p><u>Use of volunteers – positive if alongside trained staff</u></p> <p>I have no objections to using volunteers to add value (not to replace trained staff, preferably the SAME staff who get to know the community). (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p> <p>Every library should have a qualified librarian on the premises throughout its opening hours; all other staff if needs be could be volunteers and/or unqualified/in training. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Use of volunteers – volunteer-run libraries (and thus Option 3) not acceptable</u></p> <p>Option Three [is not] acceptable. Community run libraries can provide an excellent service and a real local hub (as illustrated by the success of Friern Barnet Community Library). But while this model can certainly play a useful role in the future, I do not think it is practical to expand it on the scale envisaged by Option Three. (Theresa Villiers MP)</p>
Size reduction	<p><u>Size reduction – unacceptable</u></p> <p>To substantially reduce the library in size will mean it will have a very limited number of books proving impossible to access what you want or to be inspired by, let alone be able to provide anything else. (Resident)</p> <p>I don't want my library to close or become a tiny room where there are hardly any books. (Young Resident)</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p>We consider that the 3 options that the Council is consulting on are unacceptable – the massive reduction of the library space to the size of the present computer room, approx. 540 sqft is ridiculous! The space will have to be very tightly timetabled and many of the activities currently available to the local schoolchildren will be curtailed. (Resident)</p> <p>I have examined the plans to replace the existing libraries with fewer and smaller ones, and would like your help to understand how these mini-libraries will actually operate. The model appears to be the Hampstead Garden Suburb library, which I am told is 540 square feet. I have looked at it, and see that: there are only two computers; there is no desk space for readers; there are very few books (obviously!); there is no catalogue consultation space apart from the two computers; there are no newspapers apart from a local free-sheet. Although it obviously serves some purpose, it is unable to fulfil most of the normal functions of a public library. School children are normally the heaviest library users, as they often need a safe, quiet place to work, and the research facilities are a useful bonus. This library is not and cannot be used by them. There is no possibility of browsing and finding an interesting and surprising book after a first visit, as the library is too small. To reduce other libraries to this size would mean getting rid of many thousands of books... This library's user numbers are very small because the library itself has little to offer and could not accommodate people who wanted to sit for an hour or more, as so many library users do. (Resident)</p> <p>Have Officers lost their senses suggesting a Library of some 540 sq feet. This is an area of 25 ft x 20 ft; size of one's living room. Absolute ridiculous. What can one do in such a small space – it is nonsensical, farcical and a big joke even to suggest this. (Cllr Sury Kathri)</p> <p><u>Size reduction – must be kept to a minimum</u></p> <p>The consultation document envisages a reduction in floor space for library services in each building. It would be essential to provide clarification on how that will impact on each of the libraries in my constituency. Some modest reduction in floor space might be acceptable, particularly if it were accompanied with refurbishment and better disabled access. But any reduction needs to be kept to a minimum. (Theresa Villiers MP)</p>
Income generation	<p><u>Income generation - positive</u></p> <p>Use of computers could be 50p or £1 for the first hour, not free... By all means hire out spare rooms. (Resident)</p> <p>Better use of library facilities for external groups, with a view to generating an income stream is a sensible way to contribute to the financial sustainability of our local libraries... (Theresa Villiers MP)</p> <p>Before a probably irreversible change occurs to scale down the library services, I would like to ask that another route is taken whereby libraries such as East Finchley are given opportunities to rethink what they can offer to users so that a degree of funds can be generated. Selling coffees, renting rooms, lecture series, offering classes...anything that could help the building to raise some funds. (Resident)</p> <p>The three proposals do not explore options that seek to develop and attract more people as well as potential funding and revenue streams which could help bridge the funding</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	gap... (Martin Primary School)
Open library	<p><u>Open Library – could be acceptable</u></p> <p>Access to books after hours would be welcome especially if there were more books and certainly more reference books or a dedicated research computer with a list of available sites to aid schoolteachers and others in their research. (Lady Palmer of Child Hill)</p> <p>I accept that changes to the way libraries are staffed is necessary if savings are to be made without closing any libraries. I also accept that the self-service model outlined in the consultation (which used in some other parts of Europe) should be properly considered. Before I could support such a change though, I would need more detailed information and assurance on how this model would work in practice. In particular, what steps will be taken regarding security and what options will library customers be given when seeking information outside of staffed hours? (Theresa Villiers MP)</p> <p><u>Open library – unacceptable (too impersonal)</u></p> <p>We [do not] want a computerized system only without the opportunity to speak to an actual person. The impersonal approach only alienates citizens, particularly the elderly, without the chance at least to say “Hello” now and again... (Resident)</p> <p>It is a mistaken concept to suggest that existing services can be replaced with an on-line version with good effect. Many people have neither the money nor the skill to operate a computer (or similar device). Others require the very library that is under threat in order to obtain on-line access... [older people find] it a genuine struggle... To replace the existing service with an on-line model is a quick way out for the Council yet will exclude a goodly proportion of the community. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Open library – unacceptable (safety of people and library contents)</u></p> <p>None of us will feel safe in unstaffed premises, the old [and] young women and children will all be at risk. (Resident)</p> <p>There is a good reason why children are not allowed into schools unsupervised. Not only will there be theft and vandalism in unsupervised libraries, including loss of computer equipment, but there is also a risk of bullying of children by children, and worse, a risk of grooming and sexual predation by paedophiles. [Even if children are excluded] there is still a risk of theft, vandalism and assault. You cannot concentrate on studying if you are worrying about who else might enter the building when there is no-one around to hear you scream. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Open library – excludes young people</u></p> <p>If swipe cards are restricted to adults, children's learning will be restricted. (Resident)</p>
Library relocation	<p><u>Library relocation - more information required</u></p> <p>The consultation states that some libraries might be relocated. The Council needs to provide information about which libraries might be moved and where they would go. I would be gravely concerned at the prospect of a library closing its doors without a very firm guarantee of its re-opening immediately on another site which was equally convenient for my constituents. (Theresa Villiers MP)</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
Specific to East Finchley Library	<p><u>Closure (and thus Option 2) unacceptable</u></p> <p>There was a well attended public meeting this week about East Finchley Library. Please keep your grubby paws off it. (Resident)</p> <p>I appeal to you...to oppose any measures to close East Finchley Library and retain it with qualified, experienced staff. (Resident)</p> <p>I do hope you will think very long and hard before you vote to deprive our community of such a well loved and heavily utilized building. (Resident)</p> <p>It would be a retrograde step to close our Library or alter the professional functioning of the staff. There are a lot of families and the elderly in our area now who will feel this loss personally as we are a local community who value our independence and rights as citizens to use our Local Library Service when we decide to use it. (Resident)</p> <p>East Finchley...may be on the borders a long way from Chipping Barnet or Hendon and other outer reaches but we need our local library to remain in its existing building with a great deal of refurbishment... It needs to be open in normal daylight hours, including lunchtimes, plus one or two evening sessions per week and fully staffed by professional librarians. (Resident)</p> <p>The 2nd option - the proposal to close our Library - has been on the Council's agenda before and it is completely unacceptable to the residents of East Finchley. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Size reduction and reconfiguration (listed building)</u></p> <p>Are you aware that the building is Grade II listed...and that the listing includes [the] main staircase, the curved partition between the inner hall and the lending library, the original wood counters and bookshelves in the main hall and the children's room? Not really clear on how re-configuration is achievable in this context... (Resident)</p> <p>It is a listed building. Even the interior is listed. The staircase is listed, the shelves are listed and the counters are listed. We are watching carefully. (Resident)</p>
Specific to Childs Hill Library	<p><u>Closure (and thus Options 2 and 3) unacceptable</u></p> <p>I think...people should come first, not money. Save this well known and well loved library with friendly and helpful staff. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Must consider co-location</u></p> <p>There is certainly scope for its space to be used for more Council services and outreach particularly as the Council Community Hall was in the block that burnt down and has not been replaced. (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p>
Specific to Mill Hill Library	<p><u>Closure and size reduction unacceptable</u></p> <p>Local Mill Hill people are very upset at the idea that they might lose their library and fail to see how the functions that a library is required to fulfil could possibly be achieved in a space that is less than 1/10th of the size of the current facility. (Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum)</p>
Specific to Church End	<p><u>Size reduction – unacceptable</u></p> <p>My mother is 94 years old and we attend [Church End and South Friern Libraries] on a</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
and South Friern Libraries	weekly basis to play Scrabble. If the libraries are relocated to smaller premises it will no doubt compromise the amount of space available for such activities, not to mention the areas put aside for computer use and the reading of daily papers and magazines. (Resident)
Specific to Osidge and South Friern Libraries	<p><u>Closures (and thus Option 2) unacceptable</u></p> <p>I accept that it would be hard to make the savings needed by the Council without some reduction in funding for libraries...the Council would be justified in seeking to make some savings from the libraries budget. However, the Council needs to find a way to make those savings whilst continuing to provide excellent quality library services to my constituents. I do not believe that it is necessary or justifiable to close any of the libraries in my constituency. There are other more efficient ways to reduce costs by reforming the way libraries are run. (Theresa Villiers MP)</p> <p>I...reject Option Two since it would mean the closure of two libraries in my constituency (Osidge and South Friern)... There are elements of Option One which I can support, in particular the fact that it keeps all libraries open in my constituency and would lead to longer opening hours. But there are important questions which would need to be resolved before Option One could be acceptable. (Theresa Villiers MP)</p>
Specific to Hendon Library	<p><u>General comments</u></p> <p>I am most concerned, as a regular user of Hendon Library, about the proposed downsizing of the library and its services. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Money spent on recent upgrades should not be ‘wasted’</u></p> <p>Any downgrading of Hendon, the central Library, makes nonsense of the money spent on its updating and renewal with English Heritage. (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p>

Comments on the consultation process

- 18.16 The following table summarises comments and questions relating to the consultation process, either in general or concerning specific elements (for example the questionnaire and consultation document).
- 18.17 Most comments were made in relation to the consultation questionnaire, which was described as ‘leading’, ‘loaded’, ‘confusing’ and ‘complex’. Further, it was considered limiting insofar as residents were unable to make additional or alternative suggestions.
- 18.18 Other complaints were that drop-in sessions were held at inappropriate times and that the consultation outcomes are pre-determined.

Figure 96: Summary of comments on the consultation process

Theme	Sub theme and details
‘Loaded’ or biased questionnaire	<p><u>Questionnaire is ‘loaded’/biased</u></p> <p>[We] are not going to fall into your obvious trap by filling in the loaded questions on the “consultation”...along the lines of</p> <p>Q How would you like to die?</p> <p>a. By strangling</p> <p>b. By poisoning or</p> <p>c. By stabbing</p> <p>If you do not want to die by any of the above means, then please give an alternative way of how you would like to die. (Resident)</p> <p>I know you are encouraging use of the sham “engage barnet” method but I do not want to express my views through it as the responses are all loaded into trying to get us to accept the least worst option (Resident)</p> <p>The questions, if asked in an interview (or a courtroom) would be regarded as ‘leading’. (Resident)</p>
Non-user friendly questionnaire	<p><u>Questionnaire not user-friendly</u></p> <p>[It is a] less than user friendly Consultation questionnaire which doesn’t easily or necessarily address local concerns. (Lord Palmer of Childs Hill)</p> <p>I have thought very hard about the Survey Questionnaire and I conclude a lot of time and monies have been expended on a very ill-thought out exercise. I like many residents have been put off by the sheer confusing and complexity of the forms and the time one has to expend on it... I do not feel my time would be put to good use in completing the survey... (Cllr Sury Kathri)</p>
Limited consultation	<p><u>Consultation is limited</u></p> <p>Some [questions] are impossibly limited – e.g. the question on ‘which library do you use?’ allows only one answer. I use three libraries and by choosing one I might be helping to sign the death warrants of the other two. (Resident)</p> <p>There has not been enough opportunity for residents to make additional suggestions. (Resident)</p>
Inappropriate meeting times	<p><u>Meetings held at inappropriate times</u></p> <p>If this drop-in session at Mill Hill Library is for local residents to discuss the future of their local library and the plans for Barnet's Library Service, then it is most unsatisfactory to give less than 24 hours notice of the meeting and to hold it in the afternoon of a normal working day. If this is an example of the Council's attempts at local democracy and approachability, then it is quite absurd. How many of the so called interested parties do you expect to turn up at such short notice and how many, who have an interest in the Mill Hill Library, will be able to attend... (Resident)</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
Consultation outcomes pre-determined	<p><u>Consultation outcomes pre-determined</u></p> <p>It seems you have already decided to close the purpose built library in East Finchley...we regret the decision to close in spite of the immense NGO effort more than 100 years ago. (Resident)</p> <p>Such surveys I have no faith in and are just box-ticking exercise as the decision has been made, no matter what dressing one tries to put on (Cllr Sury Kathri)</p> <p>There are no ‘Options’, the only manner in which the libraries can be managed is to continue to provide at least the existing service. Therefore it would be misappropriation of scarce public funds to carry out a consultation, the result of which is a foregone conclusion. (Resident)</p>

Other Issues Raised

^{18.19} The following table summarises other noted comments, which were around: the need for LBB to learn lessons from successful library services elsewhere (Tower Hamlets for example) and/or work with communities to identify innovative solutions; the preparedness of several respondents to pay more council tax to retain library services; and the comparatively small saving the proposed changes will yield, especially when compared to their apparently potentially damaging consequences.

Figure 97: Other issues raised

Theme	Sub theme and details
Learn from positive examples elsewhere	<p><u>Must learn from successful library services elsewhere</u></p> <p>We understand that England is short of cash. But it is also true that some libraries in the land have succeeded in creating a vibrant and thriving community hot spot. Tower Hamlets for example. (Resident)</p>
Saving too small to justify changes	<p><u>Saving insignificant in the context of potential consequences</u></p> <p>According to the Edgware & Mill Hill Times, the council hopes to save £2.85 million over six years. If this is correct then the saving will be £1.43 per person, per year. Surely no one could believe that the average person would rather have £1.43 each year than a library service? I would be interested to hear the argument against providing libraries since I cannot imagine why anyone would want to shut them down - and for such a petty saving. (Resident)</p> <p>Given the small nature of the proposed cost savings compared to the Council's total budget and the significant level of harm such a decision will cause, such a strategy is incredibly short sighted. (Resident)</p> <p>The amount of the proposed savings as a result of the cuts suggested by our Council is derisory compared with the damage which will be caused if any of their options is allowed to proceed. (Resident)</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
Raise council tax	<p><u>Prepared to pay more Council Tax to retain services</u></p> <p>In a situation where money is as tight as it is at present it was wrong to raise council tax, which has exacerbated the situation. (Lady Palmer of Childs Hill)</p> <p>Every week for the past forty years I have visited East Finchley library, both to borrow and to reserve books and I would be happy to pay higher council tax to retain the service... I beg you to raise our council tax in order to retain these beacons of civilisation. (Resident)</p> <p>Can you also explain why you have not considered raising the tax required to keep the existing system running? I have not met anyone who pays council tax who would be unhappy with that. It seems to be the function of the council to provide the services we want and raise the tax to pay for them. Is that wrong? (Resident)</p>
Savings made elsewhere	<p><u>Savings could be made elsewhere</u></p> <p>Barnet has obviously got lots of spare money. It has cut council tax by 1%, it had £500k spare to squander on one street in Golders Green, it has a CEO, a Deputy, AND a Chief Operating Officer. Cannot possibly need all of these as services have been decimated to a point where there is nothing for these overpaid officers to run. Barnet also has lots of spare money to pay to consultants. If it has all this spare money, then it doesn't need to cut services... (Resident)</p>
LBB should work with community to identify alternatives	<p><u>Work with community to identify innovative solutions</u></p> <p>We note that the proposed 'savings' will not take effect until the financial year 2016-17. This gives time for new, innovative solutions to be developed. We would urge that you reject the three options currently on the table and work with the local community, including Martin Primary School, over the coming months to take account of the ideas and suggestions of recent reports by the Sieghart Commission and Arts Council, and local residents on libraries and their use in the twenty first century in order that East Finchley library is rejuvenated and continues to serve the wider East Finchley Community. (Martin Primary School)</p>
Comments on mobile library service	<p><u>Praise for service</u></p> <p>I think the mobile library service is excellent; and its 'couriers' most helpful and polite. (Resident)</p> <p><u>Suggestion to save money</u></p> <p>Maybe a delivery of say 6 weeks instead of 4 weeks would help the situation. (Resident)</p>
Need to consider needs of particular user groups	<p><u>Requirements of Barnet Choral Society</u></p> <p>The choir...has had a long and fruitful relationship with the library services... We are, therefore, concerned to ensure that this service should continue and, should relocation be required, the needs of the service user and council staff are considered. We recently borrowed 120 copies of Mendelssohn's Elijah...almost 13 stone. This is a huge weight for both your staff and the choir librarian to lift, so it is important that provision is made for the easy transfer of the material between people and that this point is adjacent to a car park. As you will appreciate, proximity to public transport is not a solution. (Barnet Choral</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	Society)

Detailed Submissions

^{18.20} As aforementioned, some written submissions have been summarised in detail to highlight their main arguments - and primarily their alternative proposals for Library Services in Barnet. They have been chosen not because they are inherently more important than any other – but because they are either particularly well-evidenced or raise several ‘different’ issues to those repeated by a number of respondents.

^{18.21} Summaries such as these cannot do full justice to the arguments and evidence of the submissions, but they at least make them more accessible and indicate the main points of view expressed.

East Finchley Library Users’ Group (EFLUG)

What is a library?

The East Finchley Library Users’ Group (EFLUG) suggests that a library is where you get access to books and reading material, and by extension to: knowledge; information; advice; culture; literature; inspiration. It also says that a public library is: a place where a community can come together in comfort and warmth and safety and security; a refuge or place of tranquillity; a place of learning and self-development; where children can get to love books and reading and be inspired to learn; a centre of literacy and a place of study; and where senior citizens can get contact and avoid isolation. A library is therefore not just a place from where to borrow books, which is the underlying assumption or 'vision' of Barnet's three options.

EFLUG claims that a lack of vision and judicious investment in the library service is beginning to impact adversely on some aspects of usage insofar as whilst membership at EFL has been growing, the media spend is declining, the hours have been reduced and there have been lunch-time closures in recent times, all of which gradually erodes the service.

The three options

EFLUG believes that the three options proposed are unimaginative, lacking in vision and are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of what a library is and its value to communities like East Finchley (EF). As above, it says that libraries are not primarily about book loans and that the ‘paltry’ space allocated for library services (540 ft², the size of the current computer room) at East Finchley Library (EFL) in the proposals reflects this lack of understanding.

EFLUG believes that reducing EFL to ‘a room or nothing’ will have an adverse impact on: community cohesion (EFL is one of the few places the wide diversity of EF’s community regularly comes into contact); children and young people’s learning, literacy and development; senior citizen’s sense of security and inclusion and their warmth in winter; mothers’ well-being and mental health, students’ revision and exam success; disabled people’s sense of inclusion; regular primary school access to library facilities; employability levels among the local work force; teen anti-social behaviour and crime; adult literacy and skills development; health and well-being; information underpinning democracy; and the reduction of the digital divide.

The Group says that all of these negative impacts have cost implications in the medium to long term for a range of government departments and local authority services – in other words, the short-term perspective merely shifts social costs to other parts of the public sector. Further, it suggests that in the future an increasing percentage of the population will live alone and more people will work from home – and as people lead more isolated lives the role of the library and its impact on well-being will grow.

EFLUG also says that LBB's proposals around East Finchley library once it is reduced to 540 ft² are not properly costed with regard to revenue and take no account of the fact that it is a valued Grade II listed building or the actual market for medium-to-long-term office space in the locality.

A fourth option?

EFLUG appreciates the unsustainability of the status quo but wishes to maintain the current level of library provision at East Finchley Library and re-shape it going forwards to be fit for the 21st century. One way in which it proposes to achieve this is to increase utilisation of the library's first floor space through a more entrepreneurial approach. EFLUG says that current utilisation is 7.75 hours per week at £30 per hour (a lower rate than elsewhere locally – the Church Hall opposite charges £40 per hour), which generates an income of around £12,000 per annum. This, it says, is around 10% of potential utilisation and that full utilisation at market rates would amount to a £154,000 per annum increase- which would exceed the planned savings envisaged in LBB's Options One or Three gained through reducing the size of the library (£148,767 and £145,320 respectively).

It is also anticipated that hall hire would be staffed and managed by volunteers (including key-holders), which it considers a good example of how volunteers can best be used - not to displace trained librarians but to complement them. It also suggests that volunteers could be used to undertake the business development (i.e. promoting and selling the space) and to build up the party services and infrastructure (from décor to nurturing a network of entertainers), all with a retail-like customer service attitude, motivated by the fact they would be saving the library. By EFLUG's estimation, this one entrepreneurial initiative based on existing resources plus volunteer effort two days a week, exceeds the current revenue of the branch.

EFLUG also asked local citizens familiar with EFL to suggest ideas to help initiate a 'more imaginative, community-minded and sustainable vision for EFL in the 21st Century', contributing their ideas via the EFLUG website and social media pages. A selection of their suggestions can be seen below:

Install a café staffed by volunteers OR outsourced to a commercial venture (which would be located in a part of the high street under-provided with such facilities)

Hire out the upstairs hall for children's' birthday parties etc. staffed by volunteers (providing revenue with no extra costs) – and for classes such as English as an Additional Language, yoga and pilates, mindfulness and meditation and arts and crafts

Hire meeting space to corporates/businesses for workshops and meetings, especially those connected with learning and creativity

Use back office and un-used space for an Amazon (or similar) parcel drop-off/collection service

Make EFL the arts centre of East Finchley by: establishing it as the headquarters of East Finchley Open and other active community arts groups; and providing exhibition space

Base all East Finchley councillor surgeries, MP surgeries and other local authority meetings in the building, which is right at the centre of the community

Make EFL a learning centre by, for example, hosting stage-specific study skills courses for teens and Transfer to Big School sessions for Year 6 students – and offer space for inter-school workshops

Provide a home for other community groups which are short on space

Create a central hub for the whole community (EFL is apparently centrally located where the broadly working class community meets the broadly middle class community and also serves three local schools [Martin School, Holy Trinity, Oak Lodge] whose pupils all make regular visits there. In the latter case these are largely children with special educational needs where such contact with their community is particularly important)

Integrate Library and Adult Education services as modelled by the internationally renowned Ideas Stores in Whitechapel and across Tower Hamlets, becoming a focus for life-long learning and employability - and re-brand and de-formalise the library to emphasise its relevance to the community and bring it in line with modern practice (as Ideas Stores have done)

Develop a co-working space like the Hub in Islington, combining the services of a shared office space, an events space, and an active network

Enhance the library's information services, especially digital ones

Support users in their use of the internet and digital services through a relevant agency (such as the Tinder Foundation/UK Online Centres)

Offer: a job shop and/or career workshops for local unemployed and work-place returners; creative writing classes; advice and guidance sessions and surgeries (replacing the local services lost on Church Lane); and a Barnet-wide (or North London-wide) dyslexia advice centre

Actively create local partnerships to bring even more people into the library

Signpost the EFL from the nearby retail part of the high street

Emulate retail practices and customer service standards (for example at high street book shops).

EFLUG thus requests that LBB: withdraws its current three unsatisfactory proposals; establishes a task force, drawing on the professional, expert and other resources of the local community, to work with relevant LBB officers to explore Option 4 in detail over a set term, including carrying out full costings; carries out an analysis of the knock-on costs of their three proposals on other local services to get a true, holistic picture of the savings/costs; adopts an approach that focuses as much on innovation and entrepreneurialism as cost cutting.

Mill Hill Preservation Society (MHPS)

MHPS well understands the financial challenges facing the Borough and sympathises with the pressures the library service is now facing. It says that its response to the consultation has been drawn up in full acknowledgement of these priorities.

MHPS's appraisal of LBB's three options for library services is as follows.

Option One (reduce to 540 square feet and possibly relocate)

MHPS has no objection in principle to relocation, but feels this would have to be within an equally convenient location (probably in the Mill Hill Broadway area) to meet the criterion of easy access.

MHPS feels that reducing to 540 square feet could not allow most of the wide range of community activities now operating at the library and fails to allow community engagement. It also suggests that providing reading, literacy and learning opportunities would be impossible since the space would be too small to accomplish these tasks adequately.

MHPS says that sessions for the elderly would probably not be possible and wheelchair use would be difficult in such a small space – thus not safeguarding services for vulnerable people. It also says it would be difficult to cope adequately for ethnic minority needs in such a restricted size.

The Society says that, in Section Two of the options paper, the more effective delivery of library services is called for as the population grows and changes. It believes that reducing Mill Hill Library to a minimum size would be entirely contrary to this objective.

Option 2 (closure of the Library)

MHPS feels that closing Mill Hill Library would fail to meet the stated purpose of easy access and of having a library within thirty minutes by public transport for 95% of residents. If closed then the only other libraries within a reasonable distance would be Hendon, Colindale, Finchley, Church End and Edgware and MHPS says that the question of access to these is critical. With reference to public transport there are two modes locally (rail and bus) – and the Society concludes that the 'thirty minutes by public transport for 95% of residents' criterion could not be met for most Mill Hill residents by either method.

In terms of safeguarding vulnerable people, the Society says that Hendon Library is a considerable walk from the nearest bus stop and would be highly inconvenient for elderly and disabled people. It also says that the only practically accessible library is Edgware, and that only for those residents near the necessary bus routes.

Finally, the Society says that the closure of Mill Hill Library would totally fail to meet the clearly stated library service objective of engaging with communities.

Option Three (volunteer approach)

The MHPS says that if no community group takes over the library, then it would close and would be subject to the same objections made above concerning closure. If a community group were to take it over, the Society is concerned that it would still fall victim to the reduction in size and the resulting negative impact on outcomes.

Alternative strategy

The Society's overall conclusion is that none of the three Options meets the purposes and criteria clearly laid down in the consultation document as far as Mill Hill Library is concerned. Nevertheless, it says it takes the Borough's financial challenges equally seriously and has looked carefully at how to withstand such challenges – and submits an alternative strategy for consideration.

MHPS says that, as central costs account for 28.5% of the overall libraries budget, a major erosion of this cost is desirable – and suggests the following two alternative routes to achieving this:

Twining with either Brent or Camden to share overheads and reduce the central cost

An outsource (not-for-profit) provider at a saving on central cost – as has been adopted for many other Borough services.

Finally on delivery, the Society notes the concern over staffing costs, which make up the main bulk of Mill Hill costs at £142,470. There are 43 staffed opening hours a week for a five-day week and it is suggested that if this were to go to 10.30am-6.00pm from Tuesday to Friday and 10.30am-6.30pm on Saturdays, this would achieve 38 staffed hours a week - a staff saving of around 14% or some £21,000 per year. The Society also notes the interest in self-service and believes this could help reduce the density of staffing during opening hours.

The Society also comments on network structure and the viability of Mill Hill Library in its present shape. It is not wedded to the precise location of the library as long as it remains convenient- and suggests that the possibility be explored of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) gain on a development of the library site with a subsidised rehousing of the library.

Overall then, MHPS feels that if central costs can be mitigated by a worthwhile amount, staffing cost can be reduced locally by a worthwhile amount and a realisation of the site under a CIL and a subsidised rehousing take place, there should be sufficient cost saving to meet the bulk of the savings target while at the same time retaining a facility that closely matches the outcomes specified in the strategy.

Mill Hill Residents' Association (MHRA)

MHRA's library vision

MHRA does not support any of LBB's three options for library services. It feels that the future vision offered by Barnet Council will harm the local communities that will either lose or have their libraries reduced to a 'stump'. It suggests that each of the options presented will damage wellbeing and social mobility in those communities.

However, it also agrees that the current library system needs to change and adapt to the current economic situation and believes there are significant opportunities to reform and revitalise the borough's libraries.

As such, it rejects each one of the council's consultation options and argues instead for a regenerated library system that plugs the funding gap by developing large open and configurable spaces that allow for: using branch libraries as Community Hubs (in line with the findings of the Government-sponsored Sieghart Report and the views of the Carnegie Trust); hiring out library space (out-of-library hours) to facilitate local meetings, performances and music, film and comedy clubs; and becoming the destination of choice for local start-up businesses.

MHRA also suggests that:

Increased footfall into the libraries should be encouraged by the provision of high quality cafés, exhibitions, Wi-Fi and high quality office, printing and study facilities

Libraries should include: quiet spaces for studying and reading; a local research and study point for all ages; desk spaces for temporary hire; children's play spaces; Citizens Advice Bureaux and councillor surgeries; and a point of contact between the Council and residents

The Council should consider: taking advantage of Section 106 funding to provide capital for new or rebuilt libraries; embracing commercial sponsorship; using existing or planned funding streams from the council; and developing opportunities for local businesses to sponsor events

The library service should aim for as much self-sufficiency in energy generation as possible (the Council should investigate the use of solar panels at library sites to help offset energy costs)

The management of Barnet's libraries should be shared out among other authorities (such as Surrey, Hertfordshire or Haringey) on a joint venture basis to allow economies of scale - or outsourcing the libraries to mutual, co-operative or other commercial organisations should be considered

Each branch library could benefit from the input of a Friends of the Library group that would represent library users to the council, get involved with fundraising activities and get directly involved with the management of their branch through the establishment of a governing board

Branch libraries need a commercial champion or leader to seek out revenue earning opportunities.

The proposal that libraries should reduce to 540 sq ft should be rejected as this will ultimately kill off any library that is reduced to this size. In such a small space it is impossible to provide an adequate library that serves the needs of a wider community and would make the Community Hub proposals referenced above impossible to implement

The automation proposals should be rejected as they would render it impossible to run events in the evening and therefore remove at a stroke the ability of the library space to function as a Community Hub (resulting in lost revenue). The Society is also concerned that it would be a high security risk both for library users and the stock

LBB should avoid volunteer led and run libraries, which are considered unsustainable by the Sieghart Report and which do not have access to the central book lending system.

MHRA rejects the proposal that libraries should be within no more than 30 minutes travel time by public transport and regards this as a tactic to reduce the density of libraries in the borough. It also feels that if this was adopted as official council policy, it would act as a deterrent for many families to visit libraries. Where possible, MHRA says there should be a public library within walking distance for the majority of Barnet residents.

MHRA suggests that Barnet's population will shortly be similar to that of Bristol. It notes that the City of Bristol has 27 branch libraries to serve its population, while Barnet currently has 14 - half of which are under threat of closure or severe reduction.

Finally, MHRA says that if Barnet Council chooses to shut or reduce its libraries simply to save money, it will leave a damning legacy to the residents of the borough - but that if it is prepared to think boldly and to establish library-based 'hubs', it will be seen as a Council that listens to the concerns of residents and is prepared to take the chance to build community cohesion and become a beacon borough.

Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum (MHNF)

The case for change

MHNF recognises the need for change: it sees that the statutory provision of Library Services by Barnet Council is currently performed at considerable cost and that libraries are evolving from simply being a place to borrow books. It is understood that the provision of all services needs to be prioritised within reducing budgets and the Council has little scope to manoeuvre. However, the Forum also believes that the Council's three options either fail to give sufficient detail on the Council's thinking about the future of Library services in the Borough or indicate that LBB has not taken full regard of best practice in the operation of Library services, both in England and overseas.

Best practice

MHNF notes that Surrey County Council with a population approaching 1.2million (three times that of Barnet) operates nearly 60 Libraries – and that reference to their website show how impressive and varied the Library offering is, with central reservations of local meeting rooms and an elaborate Calendar of Events. The Forum compares what is offered through Barnet's own website unfavourably compared to Surrey and feels that turning the service into a profit centre rather than suggesting closures could be a way forward taking the Surrey CC model of operation.

The Forum also notes that Hertfordshire County Council has just approved its strategic direction for its Library Services under the theme 'Inspiring Libraries'.

It is noted that Northamptonshire set out to achieve substantial savings while keeping libraries open and improving through a 'LibraryPlus' model that is pro-active, involves and engages the community and has service integration at its heart. Their 35-location traditional library service, it is said, has managed to reinvent itself in a modern customer focused context, while achieving target savings and improving customer satisfaction.

MHNF thinks that Barnet Council should study the above models for library service provision and replicate the best ideas from each to build a positive plan for the future of Barnet's Libraries. Indeed, it suggests that a shared service with either Surrey or Hertfordshire Council might offer an appropriate way forward, retaining the provision of Library Services within the public sector run by professional librarians.

Library sites

MHNF believes that a fuller understanding of current and future library demand and usage needs to be established at each current location, and that one solution does not fit all. In Mill Hill, the Forum is not saying that a Library service must remain at its current site (which is expensive to heat, light and maintain) – and feels that the Council could realise a good return by developing the site for affordable flats and moving the library to a new, more easily sustainable site in Mill Hill.

Travel times

MHNF does not consider a 30 minute ride on Public Transport to visit a Library to be realistic or viable insofar as people use libraries for many purposes because they are local to where they live or work. The Forum feels that libraries must be local to attract people of all age groups to use the full range of services on offer.

Volunteer-run and unmanned libraries

MHNF firmly believes that libraries must be run by professionally trained librarians, which it considers fundamental to the development of a thriving Library Service in Barnet. Additionally it understands that Barnet's libraries share the 'book stock' and that this is not available to a Community-led library – a significant drawback of this model.

The Forum cites the Government-sponsored Sieghart report, which considers volunteer-led libraries to be unsustainable – and feels that volunteers could be most usefully harnessed in support of library services on a local 'Board' of interested and committed local people. Indeed, it goes on to say that libraries of the future, with a broad range of services on offer, will need to be managed not simply by someone with experience of running a library, but by a fully equipped business manager with commercial, marketing, events management, third party engagement and entrepreneurial experience and skills.

In terms of the unstaffed library concept, the Forum feels that 'unmanned' services bring security issues for individuals, the book stocks and premises.

Alternatives

The existing building in Hartley Avenue incurs high energy and maintenance costs and is not well located - nor does it structurally lend itself to future expanded use. MHNF thus considers it sensible to move the library to an alternative site in Mill Hill (there is office space available in Titan Court on the corner of Hartley Avenue and Flower Lane). The Forum suggests that a new library - reduced from its current footprint to, say, 3,000-4,000 square feet - in such a facility could be shared with a company such as Waterstones.

MHNF is also aware of the proposal from Mill Hill Residents Association to set up, as a Community Interest Company (CIC), the NW7HUB at 80 Daws Lane, Mill Hill – a site that is well served by public transport and next to a public car park. The Forum suggests that a Library (again with a reduced footprint) could be an adjunct to this facility, sharing the infrastructure and facilities of the NW7HUB under the overall operational management of the CIC team, (similar to the 'Board' mentioned above).

In terms of practicalities, library users would enter via a shared reception and the Library space would be mainly for book storage with some space for research typically utilising user supplied laptop or tablet computers linked through the centre's Wi-Fi networks. The Library could be operated to a reduced daily timetable by Barnet's own Library staff, but be accessible to those who have a current Library card, utilising self-service technology, out of the formal library operating hours - not as an unmanned site, but one where there would be other activities running at the same time, securely. Library users could spend time in the proposed cafe/restaurant, hire meeting rooms for specific activities or simply sit on the terrace to read a book or the papers. This, MHNF feels would probably provide an optimum low-cost solution to service the Council's statutory obligation of providing local Library Services.

The Research Practice (TRP)

Background

The Research Practice (TRP) says that Barnet residents who found it difficult to respond to the Council's consultation invited it to conduct research to assess the public's response to the consultation booklet and questionnaire. It also says that those who commissioned the research were concerned that any cuts/reforms should be achieved in a transparent and responsible way and were not part of any pressure group or political organisation. The **research objective** was to explore the public's: understanding of the consultation booklet and questionnaire; response to both documents and to completing the questionnaire; and perceptions of the Council's three options for library services.

TRP undertook individual depth interviews with what it described as a '*broad demographic cross-section of Barnet library users*' – as well as some non-users and people residing outside Barnet (though it should be noted that the submission makes no reference to how many depth interviews were conducted and how participants were selected). In these interviews respondents were asked to explain their reactions to the questionnaire as they attempted to complete it. Respondents were asked to read the background consultation booklet prior to being interviewed and this document was available for perusal and reference as respondents attempted to fill in the questionnaire. At the time TRP's report was published (29 January) fieldwork was continuing.

Findings - process

With regard to the consultation process itself, the primary findings from TRP's research were as follows:

People find it close to impossible to respond to the consultation in any meaningful way using the current questionnaire – and the longer people spend on the consultation, the more it gives rise to unanswered questions, the more confused they become and the more they perceive the Council's plans to be flawed

Many respondents, left to their own devices, said they would not have been able to complete and submit the questionnaire – with some suggesting that the detrimental impact of this on response levels was the intention of those who had designed the consultation process

The questionnaire was considered longwinded and confusingly constructed, containing bland, vague questions that were sometimes difficult to answer without more information and/or extensive knowledge of the library network. Respondents also felt that the questionnaire gave them little scope to express their own views – and *'seemed to trick people into unwittingly endorsing reforms and propositions with which they did not agree'*

Respondents found the background consultation booklet unhelpful insofar as it failed to explain how the Council arrived at its current proposals - nor did it give respondents other information or evidence they often felt they needed to complete the questionnaire. It was also considered unnecessarily complicated, wordy and time-consuming

Some people concluded that the whole consultation process was disingenuous or a 'con' that had been devised solely to fulfil a bureaucratic need for the Council to claim it had consulted.

Findings – the proposed options

In terms of the three proposed consultation options for the library service, the primary findings from TRP's research were as follows:

People found them difficult to understand and compare

Respondents found it difficult to think of the library service as a whole and tended to focus on what the proposals meant for the particular branches and services they personally used

The proposal to reduce libraries to one tenth of their current size left respondents wondering what such small libraries could contain and whether they would be worth using

Respondents questioned why it was more expensive for the Council to run libraries than all the other alternative ways of running the library service

People had difficulty with the idea of fully-automated libraries that would not require any staff because current library technology does not work well and staff are always needed to explain technology and to sort out problems when it goes wrong. There were also security concerns about un-staffed buildings

Some respondents felt that the proposed reforms had been arrived at in an arbitrary way and without careful consideration. For example, it was assumed that if two branches were to close (specifically East Barnet and Childs Hill under Option Three) they would be the least popular/busy ones. However East Barnet is not included in the six libraries facing closure under Option Two, prompting a suspicion that the libraries demarcated for closure had been selected at random.

Conclusion

In conclusion, TRP says that public consultations should be easy for respondents to follow and not be over-demanding of their time – and any background documentation should be concise, explain how

recommendations have been arrived at, and provide any other background information required to complete a questionnaire. It also says that questionnaires should concentrate on issues that are within respondents' own experience and which they can therefore answer with ease and with confidence. Its conclusion is that instead of a straight-forward and transparent approach to library reform, Barnet Council's current library proposals and consultation seem unfit for purpose – and that *'it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the consultation has been designed to deter response and to steer people into endorsing the council's plans'*.

Individual Resident

The resident says that their experience of a good library service is much more dynamic than currently experienced in Barnet. They suggest that libraries can be a major community asset rather than just a depot for information. They compare the Barnet service with the numerous sites in Auckland where there is a strong culture of engaging with children, leading on to more intensive adult use. Coffee is served and educators come in for sessions, leading reading, acting and singing sets. More mature adults attend too for the lively atmosphere.

With specific regard to East Barnet Library, the resident describes it as 'much underused' and feels it could easily be relocated elsewhere locally at much lower cost. They describe the example of Harpenden, where a previous Woolworths store in the town centre has been converted with low level racks and a kids play area at the rear. It is apparently well-lit, attracts a lot of young people and mothers, offers drinks, and also has space and comfortable chairs for adults and pensioners. Overall they say that *'curating the stock for occasional visitors does not justify keeping East Barnet'*.

The resident goes on to suggest that:

Libraries need to be pro-active and their buildings sized and located to meet the need - even to using schools premises for some out of hours events for outreach activities, say on Saturdays

Special events for interested groups should be held at libraries insofar as there must be local experts in every field who could come and give a half hour talk to young people on their subject (though the resident also questions whether this really requires library buildings and comes to the conclusion that *'probably not. I think Barnet has got some reorganising to undertake – probably overdue'*)

For pre-school children a means - volunteer assisted - should be found to take an enhanced offering out to the community, linking in actively with schools (not just a notice on schools' boards advertising library hours) to offer readings and more advanced engagement with kids. A small contribution for materials could, it is felt, be reasonable.

The resident says that they would have expected LBB to have segregated the market and the needs of each sector - but that this does not seem to have been done. They also comment that teenagers should use libraries much more but that there does not appear to be a plan to attract them, other than to play games and chat to friends; they did not consider this to be a good use of public funds.

Overall, the resident feels that there could be a strong future for libraries providing they are pro-actively managed. They suggest that libraries should have the Council's full support, but that they will have to adapt as the old model is dated and losing pace.

Submissions from Schoolchildren

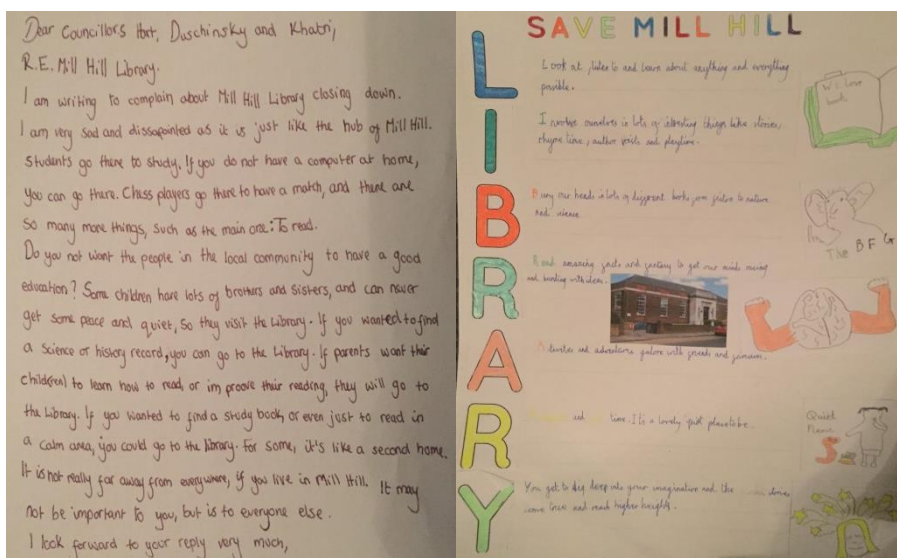
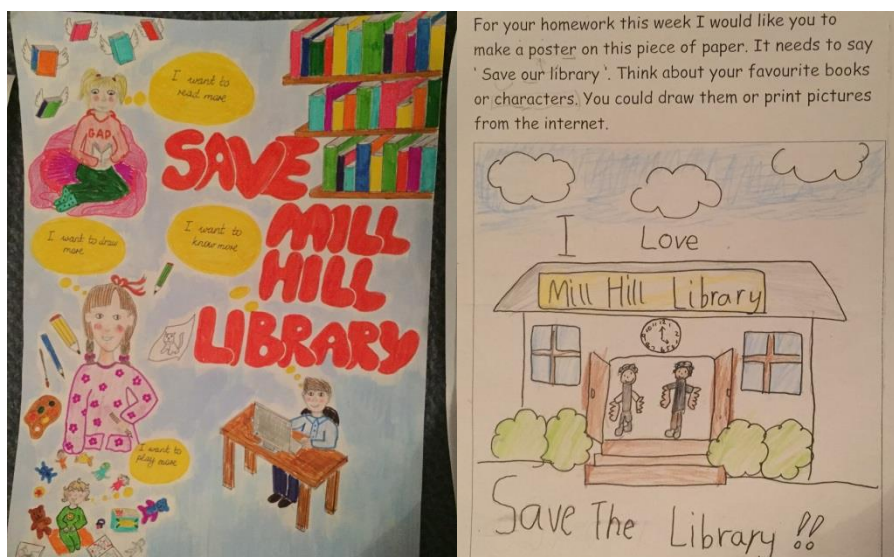
18.22 23 letters were received from Goldbeaters Primary School, seemingly as part of an organised activity. All submissions, the main themes from which are summarised in the table below, related to Burnt Oak Library.

Figure 98: Summary of comments from Goldbeaters Primary School Pupils

Theme	Sub theme and details
Library hosts many activities for children and young people - and they can make new friends	<p>All the children will miss all the games such as reading, storytime, arts and crafts and relax time.</p> <p>The library has a homework club to do your school homework. At the library there is art and craft time to do lots of stuff and also there is storytime for babies to relax.</p> <p>In the summer holidays we get to do summer activities. They have arts and crafts and reading challenges.</p> <p>If you are a child there are lots of things to do. On summer there are activities such as painting, story time and they are only for little children...</p>
Library allows young people to borrow items and use computers for free	<p>If you go to a bookshop all those people would have to buy all of those expensive books that cost a lot of money, but in the library you borrow the books.</p> <p>I love borrowing and reading from the lovely Burnt Oak library...I learn perfectly in school and more perfectly in reading lots of wonderful books.</p> <p>When my laptop breaks I can go to the library and use the computers...for free for one hour.</p>
The 'excellent' staff help you find books and keep you safe (and will lose their jobs)	<p>The librarians help us so much and they keep us safe at the library...it is such a safe place to go. People like librarians do a special job.</p> <p>Librarians keep children safe and if you have a problem they help you so you are not struggling.</p> <p>The librarians are important...because they keep us safe and tidy up after us if we have made a mess at art and craft...they do a very good job.</p>
Library allows/encourages children and adults to read for pleasure	<p>It is a really special place to go and read some books.</p>
Library offers a quiet and peaceful place to relax, read and do homework	<p>If your house is crowded there are tables for you to use in the library to do your homework.</p> <p>I go to the library to learn and do research. I also do my homework there...</p>
Closures and size reductions will mean a loss of learning opportunities	<p>If you would close the library we could not do research and to learn from an early age...</p> <p>You shouldn't close the library because we are going there to learn from an early age and we can read for free.</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	You should not close it because when you are very young and you go there and read you will grow up to be a smart adult.
Lack of computer/internet access in some homes	You can't always use your computer at home because some people don't have one because they can't buy one
Distance to alternative libraries	[I am] very concerned that there won't be a local library in our area. People would have to go very far to go to a different library

18.23 Similarly, 91 posters and letters were received from Primary Schools local to Mill Hill Library, seemingly as part of an activity co-ordinated by the schools in conjunction with the Mill Hill Residents’ Association. Some examples can be seen below:



18.24 All submissions, the main themes from which are summarised in the table below, related to Mill Library (and indeed libraries in general).

Figure 99: Summary of comments from Primary School Pupils in the Mill Hill Area

Theme	Sub theme and details
<p>Closures and size reductions will affect the whole community – but especially certain sectors</p>	<p><u>General</u></p> <p>Mill Hill Library is an amazing and important part of our community.</p> <p>Our library is the heart of our community.</p> <p>Everybody would be really sad and would miss such an important place if the library closes.</p> <p>The loss of the library will be a disaster for the local community</p> <p>People of all age groups meet in the library and socialise as part of the Barnet community.</p> <p>The library is an amazing chance for infants, juniors, teenagers and even adults to learn something new every day.</p> <p>If you shut our libraries you would be demolishing fun, friendship and education.</p> <p>Shutting the library would mean stopping friendships, blocking education, avoiding having fun with the public and preventing reading.</p> <p>It is a part of Mill Hill; our local library. This means that a great number of people visit the library for different reasons such as to study, to read, to borrow books, to use a computer; finally to learn to play chess.</p> <p>It is a free community space and in Mill Hill we are slowly losing all these places.</p> <p>Libraries are also good for communities because they encourage people to learn and read and share information. It's also somewhere people meet and be social.</p> <p><u>Older and other vulnerable/disadvantaged people</u></p> <p>It will affect most of the following groups of people - the elderly who can't travel far, the families with less money and the students who have no quiet place to study at home.</p> <p>Getting rid of local libraries means that poorer people and pensioners won't be able to read as much and a much needed community meeting place will no longer be available.</p> <p>It is a place where older people can go that is warm and they can meet up.</p> <p>Old people can go there if they're lonely.</p> <p>Some older people can use the libraries to meet friends and have a chat. If the libraries close those people will have nowhere to go and they would be lonely.</p> <p>Old people find it peaceful and a place to meet others which is beneficial especially if they live on their own.</p> <p>The library is also very important to old people as it provides not just books but a place to meet and talk to others out of the cold.</p> <p>If you shut the library the lonely elderly would have no place to meet and they would have no place to make friends.</p> <p>Young mothers can also socialise and get to know other mothers, another important group that benefits.</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	<p>Many people have reading groups as they prefer to be with other people rather than by themselves in a couch in their house.</p> <p>If people live alone the library is a place where they have a chance to meet new people.</p> <p>People on the streets can go there to warm up.</p> <p>It is also good for blind people as there are braille sections and large print books and audio books to listen to too.</p> <p>Libraries offer support to underprivileged children and adults to study.</p>
<p>Library hosts many activities for children and young people - and they can make new friends</p>	<p>You can take part in many activities like music ensembles, reading classes and organising play groups for little children.</p> <p>This precious Mill Hill Library is so important to us because it gives us the chance to take part in many fun activities, learn and revise.</p> <p>Every Tuesday I go after school to [the] library to chess club...I love it.</p> <p>Some people even learn to play instruments in the library as well as join in the music bands.</p> <p>It is a great place for activities and a quiet game of chess and chequers.</p> <p>If I couldn't go to the library then I couldn't do the summer reading challenge. I would be awfully upset...</p> <p>I have memories of Rhyme Time and wish to pass this to future generations of my own.</p> <p>Rhyme Time is great for kids because they can...express themselves in front of lots of other children their age.</p> <p>Toddlers can learn to read rhymes and develop the skill of reading...</p> <p>The libraries are places where people can meet and make friends.</p>
<p>Library allows young people to borrow items and use computers for free</p>	<p>Poorer children visit this library who cannot afford to buy their own books. Do you think money is more important than a child's education?</p> <p>For me, going to a library is about getting good books to read and it's not the same as going to a bookshop. Half of the books that I have read have been from the library and I wouldn't be me without it.</p> <p>You are able to loan books or CDs instead of spending money and then you can go back to exchange it for another.</p> <p>Although books are available in shops and computers many people can't afford to access books in this way. Without the library these people would not have the opportunity or pleasure of reading books.</p> <p>If libraries were not open people might not learn to read and only rich people would be able to buy books.</p> <p>Children can easily read five books a week, but only the wealthiest parents can afford this.</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
Library allows/encourages children and adults to read for pleasure	<p>Reading is my life, and with no libraries I would not be able to read new books.</p> <p>When I finish all ten of the books I have taken out I get a new ten. Other members of my family do so too. If you were to shut the library, my family and I would have to buy the books, which is not possible. I realise that closing the library saves money but it doesn't save reading.</p> <p>Learning how to read is crucial because reading is the key to a good education and knowledge. The libraries storytelling and reading challenges encourage the young.</p> <p>Books are inspirational and fun. Once I got a Harry Potter book which I absolutely loved. After a few days [it] inspired me to read the whole series.</p>
Closures and size reductions will mean a loss of learning opportunities	<p>Do you not want the people in the local community to have a good education?</p> <p>If parents want their children to learn to read, or improve their reading, they will go to the library.</p> <p>The library is an important place for everyone to learn, even adults. You can research all things you don't know about.</p> <p>The library is really important because it has lots of books that we learn from and if you don't read books you will become less smart.</p> <p>I am growing up using the library, it's helping me dramatically with my English and spelling.</p> <p>Many people visit the library especially for research. Some of the reasons are that he library can offer you all the information you will ever need.</p> <p>Knowledge and education are very important and enable people to improve their lives.</p>
Library offers a quiet and peaceful place to relax, read and do homework	<p>Students may go there to study as it is very quiet. They might have a big family and nowhere quiet to study at home.</p> <p>The library is also a quiet getaway for residents with big families.</p> <p>Libraries give children time to do things you wouldn't do at home. It's a nice place to do something solidly without getting distracted.</p>
The 'excellent' staff help you find books and keep you safe (and will lose their jobs)	<p>I find the staff very kind and helpful, always willing to show me where books are and let me borrow books that I can't get at school or home.</p> <p>Many retired citizens treasure the times spent with friendly librarians. It helps them interact with other people. Senior citizens go to the library because it's a nice, quiet place for talking...</p> <p>We need librarians who are trained in this profession and understand everything about books and looking after people and their private information who use the service.</p>
Lack of computer/internet access in some homes	<p>There are computers for people to use to study and find information, this is really useful for people who cannot afford a computer at home.</p> <p>The lack of access to the Internet can reduce exam results by a grade... The United Nations has declared that the Internet is a human right - public libraries, including</p>

Theme	Sub theme and details
	Mill Hill Library should support that.
Distance to alternative libraries	<p>The library helps our local community by providing a library service within a walking distance or a bus ride.</p> <p>If you close our local library we will have to travel all the way to other libraries such as Edgware!</p> <p>Travelling to another library would take a long time and children might have to go there after school when it is dark. Not all parents have the time to take them there.</p> <p>It would be unlikely for people to go to a library further than one closer, so closing libraries would cause fewer people to go. Do you want that to happen?</p>
Need to consider income generation and examine what has been done elsewhere	<p>Why can't we do something like Hillingdon, where they managed to cut running costs while increasing the stocks of books and computers.</p> <p>Some libraries even have Starbucks! They have seen their visitor numbers and book borrowing increase by 84% giving the local people a better community.</p>

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