Library Service Review
Frequently Asked Questions

Are you proposing to close some of our Libraries?
The proposal recommends that Friars and Thorpedene Library are relocated as a joint library provision at an alternative site along Delaware Road. The proposal also recommends that of the remaining 4 branch libraries, 3 will become community managed libraries and the remaining one will be a hub library managed and run by the Council.

Are you cutting our library service to help pay for the new central library at the Forum?
No, the Forum is being funded in partnership with the University of Essex and South Essex College. The Council’s £12.5m contribution was set aside from the Council’s capital budget several years ago. The Library Service is being asked to make savings from its revenue budget; i.e. the on-going, day to day costs of providing the service. Despite being a bigger building, the running costs of the Forum are anticipated to be the same as the running costs for the current central library.

How will you decide between Leigh Library and Kent Elms Library which one will become the Hub Library in the West of the borough?
We will be taking into account the responses from the consultation to help us decide the location for the Hub Library in the West of the borough. We are particularly keen that where a preference is stated for a particular location, reasons are given for this as they will help us to take a range of issues into account when making the final decision.

What’s going to happen to the staff in my library?
We will be working with staff who may be affected and will involve the trade unions. Every effort will be made to redeploy staff and avoid compulsory redundancies, although this cannot be ruled out.

Why can’t you get rid of the management instead?
Reducing the current library budget over the next three years means a review of all costs and a major reshaping of services. These include savings from a reorganisation of the current Library Management Team and other back office functions. The reorganisation will include a focus on support for Community Managed Libraries.

You conduct surveys but don’t take any notice of what people say.
These proposals are based on information from the last survey. In particular people valued the branch libraries. These proposals are a way of trying to keep the branches open despite the financial pressures.
The proposals for change are open for communities to discuss. We genuinely want to hear your views on these proposals along with any ideas you may have for other ways in which the service can be delivered. Feedback from the questionnaire and community meetings will be considered in the final decision making process.

**What if my community wants to set up volunteer run library services?**
Considering other ways to deliver library services in the borough is a key part of the consultation. We would like to hear from any community groups that may be interested in setting up volunteer run library services. Support will be available from Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to help interested groups with the process.

**What is a virtual library?**
This will be an online library service available 24 hours a day. This means that even if your library is not open, you will still be able to access a range of useful services, reserve and renew items online, download e-books, use premium reference websites.

**Are there any other options**
We have considered other options such as reducing opening hours at branches and sharing existing branch locations with other services and commercial organisations. We know from feedback we have already had from library users that some of these options would not be well received and that whatever we do, it is important that Libraries retain their core use and function.

We will consider any other alternative options that are put forward through this consultation.

**How can I find out more and have my say?**

The consultation on the proposed changes is running from 10th June to 8th September 2013.

For more information and to complete the consultation questionnaire please visit the Library Review section of the Council's website: [www.southend.gov.uk/libraryreview](http://www.southend.gov.uk/libraryreview)

Paper copies of the questionnaire can be found in your local library branch, where you can also return you completed questionnaire.

Feedback received will be collated, analysed and reported to Councillors so that they are fully informed before making any final decisions.
Community Managed Libraries – FAQ’s

What is a community managed library?
Community managed libraries are run by local community groups with support from the Local Authority’s Library Service.

Community management of a library can take different forms, but some libraries are now run by local community groups or social enterprises, usually with some professional librarian advice. Libraries might be commissioned and funded by the local authority, or might be largely self-financing.

Benefits of community managed libraries may include:
- reduced operating costs to the public sector
- helping a library to remain open and often open for longer hours
- community management can bring renewed energy and innovation to the service, prompting new activities and more flexible use of the space
- often leads to increased usage by the local community through an enhanced sense of ownership
- providing valuable experience to the community group

How do you know Community Managed Libraries will work? Do they have them anywhere else?
This model of library provision is proving very successful around the country with more than 400 in operation – more than 10 per cent of all public libraries in England. The Council has experience of working with community groups who have successfully taken over the management of some of the Borough’s community centres and will put this knowledge and experience to good use in support community groups in running a community managed library.

There are many really good examples of how these libraries have thrived in both rural and urban locations around the country; examples include:

Harbury Library (Warwickshire) –
Following the decision by Warwickshire County Council that it could no longer afford to run the library service in Harbury, a small group of volunteers formed a charitable trust to take on the continued provision of library services. Since then they have also opened up an internet café (income stream). The village, in an initiative led by the Parish Council, adopted the library after Warwickshire County Council cutbacks meant that it would no longer be considered viable. They will be developing their own village library stock of books using the best of book donations from villagers, which can be borrowed in the same way as books through the County Council service.

Farnham Common, Buckinghamshire Library (longer opening hours) –
Farnham Common Library, run by volunteers, became the first community run library in Buckinghamshire.

In October 2011 the number of volunteers trained to work at the library was 20; this number has since risen to 35. This increase in volunteers is great for the library and the community as a whole as it has helped the library to improve its opening hours. The library is a key part of the local community bringing people together, both young and old.

One volunteer librarian, who has worked at the library since it's reopening in 2011 says that she 'enjoys it' working at the library and feels that it's re-opening has ‘made it a better place’. She added ‘people comment saying it is a better place since it was made into a community library’. In answer to whether she thinks the library has been a success, she said 'yes, there is now a wider range of books available and we run many events to support the library'.

**Will community libraries be able to join new members?**
Yes, a new process will set up so this can happen. People will also be able to join the library online.

**Will I still be able to use my existing library ticket at any of the branch libraries even if they are not run by the Council?**
Yes, your existing library ticket will continue to allow you to borrow, return and reserve items at any of the library branches within Southend, Essex and Thurrock.

**Will computers and internet access still be available at community managed library branches?**
Yes, you will still be able to use computers and access the internet at any community managed libraries. This is likely to form part of the agreement between the Council and the community group.

**Who would recruit and train volunteers?**
A community group would need to recruit and manage their own volunteers. The Council will offer initial start up training and support to do this.