

Public Document Pack

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Date: Monday, 16 February 2026

To all Members of the Council

Dear Sir or Madam

**Summons to attend the Council Meeting – Tuesday, 24 February 2026 at 6.00 pm
New Council Chamber - Town Hall**

You are requested to attend the Meeting of the Council to be held at 6.00 pm on Tuesday, 24 February 2026.

Please Note that any member of the press and public may listen in to proceedings at this meeting via the weblink below –

<https://youtube.com/live/Cr7MOAimtBM>

The agenda is set out below.

Yours faithfully

Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer

This document and associated papers may be made available in a different format on request.

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence

2. Public Participation, petitions, and deputations (Standing Orders 2.6 and 17)

The Council will hear any person who wishes to address it in accordance with the Standing Orders. The Chairperson will select the order of the matters to be heard.

Each person will be limited to a period of five minutes for public participation and deputations and three minutes for petitions. This section of the meeting must not exceed 30 minutes and discussion must not refer to a current planning application.

The Council will also receive questions from the public and provide answers thereto, subject to the Chairperson being satisfied that the questions are relevant to the business of the meeting.

Requests must be submitted in writing to the Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer, or to the officer mentioned at the top of this agenda letter, by noon on the day before the meeting and the request must detail the subject matter of the address.

3. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 39)

A Member must declare any disclosable pecuniary interest where it relates to any matter being considered at the meeting. A declaration of a disclosable pecuniary interest should indicate the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. A Member is not permitted to participate in this agenda item by law and should immediately leave the meeting before the start of any debate.

If the Member leaves the meeting in respect of a declaration, he or she should ensure that the Chairperson is aware of this before he or she leaves to enable their exit from the meeting to be recorded in the minutes in accordance with Standing Order 39.

4. Minutes (Pages 7 - 14)

11 November 2025, to approve as a correct record (attached)

5. Budget and Council Tax Setting 2026-27

Report of Councillor Bell – report and appendices to follow.

Notes for Councillors:

(1) Council is requested to consider item 5 together with the following minute extract (item 6) which contain the recommendations from Cabinet in relation to Capital Strategy 2026-7 and Treasury Management Strategy 2026-27

(2) Councillors are reminded that Standing Order 22A requires a named

vote to be taken on the budget decision.

(3) The published Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) that underpin the 2026/27 budget savings plans can be found at an Appendix (separate document to follow) to the report. Councillors are asked to familiarise themselves with the EIAs in advance of the meeting.

(4) If changes are approved to the recommendations in the Budget and Council Tax Setting 2026-27 report, alterations to the recommended Council Tax resolution as contained within the report might be required. In this case Council will be requested to adjourn to enable the figures in the Council Tax resolution report to be recalculated and recirculated.

6. Reports and matters referred from the Cabinet 11 February 2026 - Capital Strategy 2026-2030 and Capital Programme 2026-2027 and Treasury Management Strategy 2026-27 (Pages 15 - 86)

The agenda item number mentioned in the heading of the individual extract refers to the agenda of the relevant Cabinet meeting. All Members have received the agenda papers and are commended to review them prior to the Council meeting.

(1) CAB 62 Capital Strategy 2026-2030 and Capital Programme 2026-27
(Agenda Item 09) (draft minute extract and report attached)

(2) CAB 63 Treasury Management Strategy 2026-27 (Agenda Item 10) (draft minute extract and report attached)

7. Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Pages 87 - 196)

Report of Councillor Bell (attached)

8. Reports and Matters referred from Cabinet 11 February 2026 - Recommendation from the Library Service consultation (Pages 197 - 640)

Report of Councillor Solomon (attached)

The agenda item number mentioned in the heading of the individual extract refers to the agenda of the relevant Cabinet meeting.

All Members have received the agenda papers and are commended to review them prior to the Council meeting.

(1) CAB 64 Recommendation from the Library Service Consultation (Agenda Item 11) (draft minute extract and report attached)

9. Using Council land for Biodiversity Net Gain (Pages 641 - 646)

Report of Councillor Waite (attached)

10. Corporate Parenting Report (Pages 647 - 652)

Report of Councillor Gibbons (attached)

11. Forward Plan dated 30 January 2026 (Pages 653 - 666)

(attached)

12. Question Time (Standing Order No.19)

Questions must relate to issues relevant to the work of the Cabinet, the Planning and Regulatory Committee, Employment, Licensing, Audit or Standards Sub-Committee.

Members are requested to supply the Democratic Services Officer with a note of each question at, or just after, the meeting. A summary note of each question will be included in an appendix to the minutes.

13. Petitions to be presented by Members (Standing Order No. 16)

These have to be received by the Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer by 12.00 noon on the day of the meeting.

14. Announcements (if any)

1. Chairperson's Announcements
2. Leader's Announcements
3. Chief Executive's Announcements

15. Urgent business permitted by the Local Government Act 1972 (if any)

For a matter to be considered as an urgent item, the following question must be addressed: "What harm to the public interest would flow from leaving it until the next meeting?" If harm can be demonstrated, then it is open to the Chairperson to rule that it be considered as urgent. Otherwise the matter cannot be considered urgent within the statutory provisions.

Exempt Items

Should the Council wish to consider a matter as an Exempt Item, the following resolution should be passed -

"(1) That the press, public, and officers not required by the Members, the Chief Executive or the Director, to remain during the exempt session, be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the ground that its consideration will involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972."

Mobile phones and other mobile devices

All persons attending the meeting are requested to ensure that these devices are switched to silent mode. The chairperson may approve an exception to this request in special circumstances.

Filming and recording of meetings

The proceedings of this meeting may be recorded for broadcasting purposes.

Anyone wishing to film part or all of the proceedings may do so unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so, as directed by the Chairperson. Any filming must be done as unobtrusively as possible from a single fixed position without the use of any additional lighting, focusing only on those actively participating in the meeting and having regard to the wishes of any members of the public present who may not wish to be filmed. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chairperson or the Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer's representative before the start of the meeting so that all those present may be made aware that it is happening.

Members of the public may also use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings at this meeting.

Emergency Evacuation Procedure

On hearing the alarm – (a continuous two tone siren)

Leave the room by the nearest exit door. Ensure that windows are closed.

Last person out to close the door.

Do not stop to collect personal belongings.

Do not use the lifts.

Follow the green and white exit signs and make your way to the assembly point.

Do not re-enter the building until authorised to do so by the Fire Authority.

Go to Assembly Point C – Outside the offices formerly occupied by Stephen & Co

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Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Council

Tuesday, 11 November 2025

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 6.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.08 pm

Councillors:

Clare Hunt (Chairperson)

Marc Aplin

Nigel Ashton

Mike Bell

Christopher Blades

Steve Bridger

Peter Bryant

Mark Canniford

Ashley Cartman

Annabelle Chard

James Clayton

Andy Cole

Jemma Coles

Peter Crew

John Crockford-Hawley

Ciaran Cronnelly

Stuart Davies

Thomas Daw

Catherine Gibbons

Wendy Griggs

Jenna Ho Marris

Nicola Holland

Patrick Keating

Sue Mason

Hugh Malyan

Tom Nicholson

Ian Parker

Robert Payne

Marcia Pepperall

Bridget Petty

Lisa Pilgrim

Terry Porter

Michael Pryke

Luke Smith

Timothy Snaden

Dan Thomas

Helen Thornton
Joe Tristram
Annemieke Waite
Roger Whitfield

Apologies: Councillors: Caritas Charles (Vice-Chairperson) Mike Bird, Richard Tucker, Martin Williams and Hannah Young.

Absent: Councillor David Shopland.

Also in attendance: Holly Law (Insights & Impact Manager, Citizen's Advice Bureau).

Officers in attendance: Hayley Verrico (Director of Adult Social Services), Mandy Bishop (Chief Executive Officer), Nicholas Brain (Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Claire Shiels (Director Children's Services), Amy Webb (Director of Corporate Services), Matt Lenny (Director of Healthy and Sustainable Communities), Mickey Green (Director of Environment, Assets and Transport) and Jessika Robinson (Committee Services Senior Officer).

COU Chairperson's welcome and announcements
53

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided an update of her recent civic duties, being:

- The Nailsea Armistice Parade on Sunday 09 November
- A Black History month event at the Tithe Barn

Councillor Hunt gave thanks to Councillor Gibbons who attended the event at Wells Cathedral to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two on her behalf.

She encouraged members to RSVP to the Christmas event letter that had been circulated.

COU Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 39)
54

None declared.

COU Minutes
55

Resolved: that the minutes from Tuesday 16 September 2025 be **approved** as a correct record.

COU Forward Plan dated 31 October 2025
56

The Leader presented the Forward Plan.

Resolved: that Council **noted** the Forward Plan.

COU 57 Draft Municipal Calendar 2026/27

The Assistant Director, Legal and Governance Monitoring Officer presented the report.

Motion: Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Daw.

Resolved: that Council **approved** the draft Municipal Calendar for 2026/27.

COU 58 Chief Executive announcements

The Chief Executive announced that the Section 151 role was being split from the Director of Corporate Services and Transformation post. Recruitment to the director post was at an advanced stage and there would be an announcement at a later date. The S151 role would be taken over by Mel Watts on 1st December. The change would entail some updates to the Constitution where delegations would need to be split between the S151 and director roles. Council was asked to instruct the Monitoring Officer to make the required changes and updates.

The Chief Executive gave thanks to Amy Webb, outgoing S151 officer.

Resolved: that Council **instructed** the Assistant Director, Legal and Governance Monitoring Officer to make the required constitutional amendments for the delegations relating to the S151 and the Director of corporate Services and Transformation.

COU 59 Public Participation, petitions, and deputations (Standing Orders 2.6 and 17)

1. Steve Voller, resident – The proposed closure of Winscombe Library.

The speaker spoke against the proposed closure of Winscombe Library was concerned that it disproportionately impacted on rural communities and reduced equitable access to services in North Somerset. He commented that the replacement mobile Library in Banwell was not exhaustive enough and that residents of Banwell would face further barriers to accessing essential community resources should Winscombe Library close.

2. Archie Forbes, resident – The proposed closure of Winscombe Library

The speaker spoke against the proposed closure of Winscombe Library and informed members that Winscombe Parish Council had conducted their own survey and consultation which had found strong public support for maintaining library services within the parish. He was concerned that the usage data North Somerset Council had used was inaccurate and that a technical failure was causing underrepresentation in the usage of the service. He shared concerns that the closure would impact the most vulnerable residents in the parish and there was a wider economic impact also.

3. David Sims, business rate payer, - The impact of NSC governance, decision

making and process on businesses on Hill Road.

The speaker spoke against the proposed parking charges for Hill Road, explaining that Hill Road was reliant on road parking. He was concerned that the charges would impact the viability of all the independent businesses and stated that North Somerset Council had failed to uphold process, governance and decision making to implement initiatives in a fair, legal manner that delivered value for money. He highlighted four areas that he had considered flawed in process and stated the council had not responded to communication from residents. He said that Council was being presented with a petition of 4,500 signatures and closed by urging members to reconsider the current proposals.

4. Tristan Merriam, business rate payer, – Impact on the community, Hill Road Area, Clevedon

The speaker spoke against the proposed parking charges for Hill Road and explained how he thought the charges would impact on his business and Hill Road. He stated that the proposal to introduce on street parking would undo the progress he had made with his own business and the introduction of parking charges was something that retailers could not afford alongside the other pressure they faced. The speaker stated that North Somerset Council was not doing enough to support independent business but instead were implementing measures that would result in inevitable business closures.

5. Devon Wilsher-Day, business rate payer – Economic Impacts on Clevedon Hill Road.

The speaker spoke against the proposed parking charges for Hill Road and of the rarity of thriving shopping areas. They noted the decline in retailers and activity on Worle High Street since the introduction of parking charges. The speaker spoke to the challenges independent retailers faced and stated that people would stop shopping should charges be implemented, and that would direct more money away from local communities and towards large global companies. The speaker urged that the Council should not let heritage shopping areas become a thing of the past and to reconsider the proposal.

6. Sandy Prater, business rate payer – Clevedon business perspective.

The speaker spoke against the proposed parking charges for Hill Road and informed Council that independent businesses were struggling after facing a series of challenges and that many were still paying back COVID loans. The speaker also stated that the Clevedon Seafront works had had an adverse impact on business as had other roadwork schemes. They expressed that customers were providing feedback that they would reduce or cease shopping in the area should charges be introduced. The speaker said that business owners needed more support and not more challenges and that proper enforcements of the two hour limit would be better than implementing parking charges.

COU 60 Petitions to be presented by Members (Standing Order No. 16)

Councillor Pryke informed members that there was no support among the

residents of Clevedon for the introduction of parking charges on Hill Road. He said that Clevedon was not asking for special treatment, but fairness. He urged Council to find a solution that works for Clevedon.

Resolved: that the Chairperson of the Council received the petition.

COU 61 Presentation by community group - North Somerset Citizen's Advice Bureau

The Chairperson introduced the speaker and suspended Standing Orders.

Standing Orders suspended as of 18:38 pm.

Members received a presentation from the Citizens Advice Bureau on the cost of living crisis and the impact on residents. Members debated the content of the presentation and sought and received answers on what the speaker felt the council could do to further support residents in regard to the cost of living pressures.

Standing Orders resumed as of 19:02 pm.

COU 62 Leader's announcements

The Leader reminded members that in December 2019, the Council adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism, which was included in the council's Hate Crime Strategy and enforced the council's commitment to the definition. He would circulate the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition in full to members.

Members were updated on changes to the cabinet membership, with Councillor Hugh Malyan replacing Councillor Hannah Young as Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport with effect from 01 December 2025. As a result, the Leader proposed that Council approve that Councillor Robert Payne, vice-chair of the Planning and Regulatory Committee, be nominated as Chairperson of the Planning and Regulatory Committee in replacement of Councillor Hugh Malyan.

Resolved: that Council **approved** the nomination of Councillor Robert Payne for the Chairperson of the Planning and Regulatory Committee with effect from 18 December 2025.

COU 63 Question Time (Standing Order No.19)

Oral questions were directed to members concerned and the summary notes and topics involved are contained within Appendix 1.

COU 64 Motions by Members (Standing Order No. 14)

None.

COU 65 Reports and matters referred from the other Committees other than those dealt with elsewhere on this agenda

(1) Audit Committee 23 September 2025

The Chairperson of the Audit Committee presented the Audit Committee Annual Report giving an overview of the activity and successes of the Audit Committee.

Motion: Moved by Councillor Keating, seconded by Councillor Tristram.

Resolved: that Council **approved** the Audit Committee Annual Report.

(2) Licensing Committee 21 October 2025

The Chairperson of the Licensing Committee presented the mid-year year report for the administration and enforcement of all licensing regimes.

In response to questions, members were informed that the appropriate officers would be asked to respond given the technical nature of the questioning.

Motion: Moved by Councillor Crockford-Hawley, seconded by Councillor Daw.

Resolved: that Council:

(a) **approved** that the final version of the revised Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Principles be **adopted** by Council, and

(b) **approved** that the final version of the new Pavement Licensing Statement of Principles be **adopted** by Council, and further;

(2) **noted** the updates regarding the Licensing Service.

COU 66 Corporate Parenting Report

Councillor Gibbons presented the report noting the feedback from the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Services and the impact that would have on how the service would be shaped.

Resolved: that Council **noted** the report.

COU 67 Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

Councillor Waite presented the report and updated members on key areas of the report for attention, advising that she had received an email response to the letter issued to the Environment Agency concerning funding concerns that she could provide an update on at a later date.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment agreed to write to government to ask for more financial support; to commit to funding for adaptation; and to make

more commitments with regard to legislation indecision making to reduce emissions from fossil fuels.

Resolved: that Council:

1. **Noted** the updates on carbon emissions from the council's own estate and activities, including recent improvements on decarbonisation, and
2. **Noted** the updates on carbon emissions from North Somerset, and
3. **Noted** the progress on existing projects to tackle climate change, which were also summarised in the report.

COU 68 North Somerset Environment Company Limited Shareholder Update

Councillor Canniford presented the report and provided an overview of the general progress, notable works and successes of the North Somerset Environment Company (NSEC).

Resolved: that Council received the NSEC shareholder update and **noted** progress to date.

COU 69 Reports on joint arrangements and external organisations and questions relating thereto

None.

COU 70 Urgent business permitted by the Local Government Act 1972 (if any)

None.

Chairperson

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Cabinet

11 February 2026

Draft Minute Extract

CAB 62 Capital Strategy 2026-2030 and Capital Programme 2026-27

Councillor Bell introduced the report, highlighting reliance on external grants due to revenue pressures preventing the council from being able to borrow to support capital projects. He noted progress on major projects including MetroWest rail, Banwell Bypass and the Winterstoke Road bridge replacement. Members welcomed officers' work securing funding and delivering long-awaited infrastructure.

Resolved: that the Cabinet

1) Recommended to Council for approval of the following:

- a) The capital strategy for 2026 to 2030 as detailed throughout the report,
- b) An increase in the capital programme of £53.657m over the 4-year period for a range of new investment proposals as detailed in section 3.5, section 3.6, Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 of the report, subject to confirmation of grant funding allocations.

CAB 63 Treasury Management Strategy 2026-27

Councillor Bell presented the report which outlined the framework for borrowing and investments for the coming year. He highlighted that the report confirmed prudent management and a focus on investment returns to support the council's long term revenue and debt position. A request for information on the Minimum Revenue Provision impact was made.

Resolved: that the Cabinet

Recommended to Council for approval;

- i) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27, as described throughout the report and shown in Appendix 1 of the report,
- ii) the Prudential Indicators for 2026/27, as shown in Appendix 2 of the report,

- iii) the change to the council's Minimum Revenue Provision approach from the straight line basis to the annuity basis effective from 1 April 2025, as shown in 3.2 of the report
- iv) the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2026/27, as shown in Section 3.3 of the report

North Somerset Council

Report to the Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 11 February 2026

Subject of Report: Capital Strategy and Programme for 2026-2030

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Mike Bell, Leader of the Council

Key Decision: YES

Reason:

Financial implications within the report are in excess of £500,000 and impact on all wards and communities within North Somerset.

Recommendations

The Cabinet is asked to:

- 1) **Recommend** to Council for approval of the following:
 - a) The capital strategy for 2026 to 2030 as detailed throughout the report,
 - b) An increase in the capital programme of **£53.657m** over the 4-year period for a range of new investment proposals as detailed in section 3.5, section 3.6, Appendix 3 and Appendix 4, subject to confirmation of grant funding allocations.
- 2) **Approve**
 - a) the amendments to the capital budget for 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix 2,
 - b) an in-principle agreement for the costs of the Carlton Street Carpark project **£2.75m** to be added to the programme for 2026/27, subject to the business case being approved and funded by the Capital Planning, Programme & Delivery Board (CPPD),
 - c) the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Families, and Lifelong Learning to make timely decisions on behalf of this committee in relation to SEND and abnormal costs as required as part of the DfE's approval process.
- 3) **Accept** the capital grant allocations listed below and the associated net increase to the capital programme which totals **£50.907m** over the 4-year period 2026 to 2030. These changes are included within Appendix 3,
 - a) +£5.382m – Local Authority Bus Grant Department for Transport (DfT)
 - b) +£21.223m - Highways Maintenance (DfT)
 - c) +£9.780m – Highways Maintenance Incentive Allocation (DfT)

- d) +£9.886m – Highways Local Transport Grant (DfT)
- e) +1.087m – Active Travel Capability Fund (DfT)
- f) +£2.930m - Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) **estimated** funding 2026/27
- g) +£0.620m – Local Authority Housing Fund (MHCLG) **estimated** funding 2026/27

4) **Delegate**

- a) the approval for the detailed highways programme to the Head of Highways in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways.
- b) the approval of any current/forecast capital grant allocation funding changes to the S151 officer, relevant director and Cabinet Member, this may include any changes to the highways conditional grant allocation from DfT if we don't meet criteria, and any changes to the assumed Disabled Facilities Grant once the allocation is confirmed.

1. **Summary of Report**

The Capital Strategy is an annual document that outlines the council's approach to capital investment over the short, medium, and longer term and gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure activity contributes to the provision of local public services within the area, together with the impact this will have on the council's asset base and financial position.

The report will provide an update to residents on how we will use our resources to support our children and young people, tackle the climate emergency and invest in our communities and infrastructure, whilst aiming to strengthen the delivery of our core services.

Given that strategic capital investment can take a long time to plan and deliver, much of the planned spending within the investment programme will have already been approved however, this report continues to provide transparency on the council's existing plans, along with the development of new spending plans that will be added into the programme for future years.

2. **Policy**

The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities was developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to support local authorities in taking decisions in capital investments.

Key objectives within this Code are to ensure that local authorities capital investment plans are affordable, prudent, and sustainable, and that associated treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice and that local strategic planning, asset management planning and proper option appraisals are fully supported.

The Code requires Council to approve an annual capital strategy as part of its budget setting process. The purpose being to demonstrate that capital expenditure and investment decisions are in line with service objectives, and that the plans are affordable and sustainable, with the resulting revenue impacts fully integrated within the annual budget setting process.

3. Details

The report includes the following sections:

- 1.1** Executive summary
- 1.2** Commentary from the Chief Finance Officer
- 1.3** Overview of the current financial programme
- 1.4** Monitoring of the current financial programme
- 1.5** New spending to be included within the capital programme – external funding
- 1.6** New spending to be included within the capital programme – council funding
- 1.7** Summary of capital spending 2025 to 2030, including all proposals
- 1.8** Pipeline – projects being developed for inclusion within the capital programme
- 1.9** Horizon scanning and future capital projects
- 1.10** Capital Risks

Please note; a glossary of terms and acronyms has been included at Appendix 7.

1.1 Executive summary

North Somerset Council continues to have ambitions to support businesses and residents through our investment plans for the region within the context of the Corporate and Local Plans, which will deliver sustainable projects with tangible benefits to our communities.

Alongside our delivery plans for increased infrastructure, housing, and economic regeneration we also need to maintain Council owned assets that are still required to deliver agreed service outcomes so that they are fit for the future as well as seek to dispose of assets that are no longer required.

We also recognise that our investment plans must be affordable over the long term and given the pressures that we continue to face within the annual revenue budget, it is likely that investment priorities for the council in the short-term will be limited and prioritised on those areas that have been allocated external funding, are linked to our transformation agenda and will unlock future financial savings, are of strategic risk and/or importance, or those which meet our core objectives which will include any health and safety or statutory obligations and requirements.

The Strategy for next year will therefore reaffirm some of the key projects we will be working on and introduce new spending plans linked to our priority areas which cover both a national and local perspective. The report will also document a broader programme of projects that will continue to be developed over time and added into the programme when supporting plans and business cases are finalised and further funding identified.

1.2 Commentary from the Chief Finance Officer

Building our financial strategies: Capital expenditure is where the council spends money on assets that will be used for more than one year and the development of an annual Capital Strategy provides an opportunity to lay down the principles and considerations being used to develop our current and future capital investment plans across the short, medium and longer-term.

The annual Strategy brings together details of the council's current spending plans as well as the future ambitions, needs and investment priorities of all services across the council so that a complete picture can be formed. Detailed delivery plans for all projects within the

programme will be reviewed to help understand the risks and spending profiles associated with each one so that resources can be aligned and matched against when they will be needed.

This holistic approach of combining our investment plans not only provides a clear vision of planned outcomes for our communities, it also supports good governance in terms of decision-making because this provides a medium and longer-term look at both the risks associated with spending large sums of money, and also understand how these plans will be funded so that we can assess the impact this may have on the council's overall finances.

The integration between revenue and capital financial planning is essential as it helps the council to manage the risks across both areas strategically as well as make sure the plans are affordable within the context of our resource base.

Asset management: Asset management, which is intrinsically linked to capital spending on assets, balances the costs, opportunities and risks against the desired performance of assets held by the council to achieve our objectives, such as supporting the delivery of core services. Asset management also enables the council to examine the need for and performance of assets and the approaches towards managing an asset over the different stages of its life cycle, i.e. starting with the conception of the need for the asset, the ongoing maintenance during use and assessing the strategic value prior to any disposal.

The council will continue to prioritise the divestment of assets that have been assessed as no longer needed to support service delivery, which will reduce exposure to future maintenance liabilities and generate capital receipts.

Summary: Given the ongoing work to assess the condition of the council's asset base, underlying risks associated with capital investment plans, pressures within other areas of the council's finances and lack of available capital resources, the approach supported by the S151 Officer in respect of capital spending in the short-term, is that it must be to limit new areas of spending unless the proposals come with external funding, are supported by a business case or can be re-prioritised by removing something from the existing programme.

Whilst the capital strategy documents the planned capital investment over the coming years, the council operates an iterative approach to managing its investment plans which means that changes can be approved throughout the year, in accordance with our governance processes. This allows the council to be flexible in our approach and take opportunities to increase spending when business cases are developed, and sustainable resources identified but also reconsider and reduce spending plans if circumstances should change.

This approach aligns to government guidance which requires the chief finance officer to ensure that the council's plans are affordable and sustainable over the medium term.

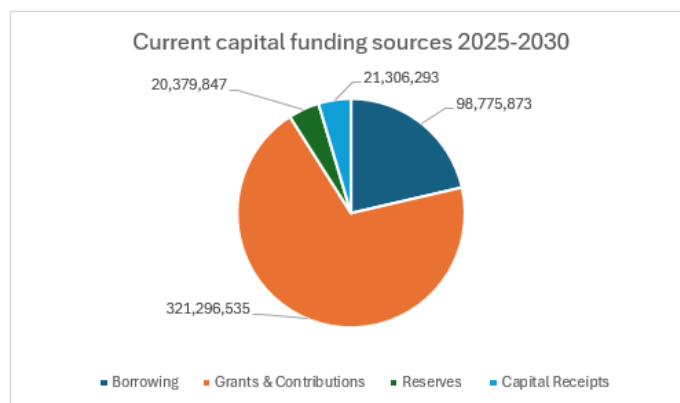
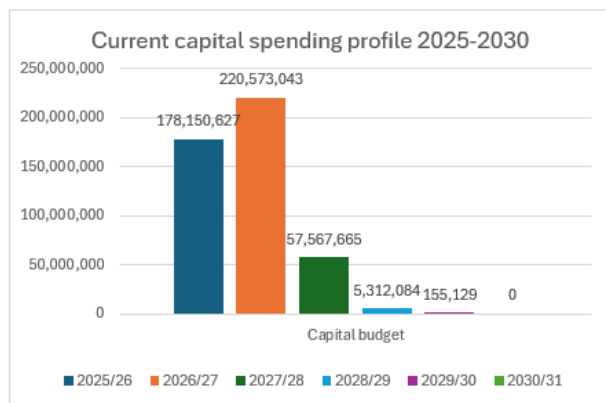
Appendix 6 provides a summary of the assets held by the council at this time.

1.3 Overview of the current financial programme

Appendix 1 provides a detailed listing of the schemes within the current capital programme although this section provides a brief overview of the main headlines to understand key components.

There are already extensive spending plans in place – over recent years we have developed a capital programme which now totals **£461.759m** and covers the period 2025 to 2030,

although as can be seen from the chart below, much of this spending is likely to happen within the next two years.



There are approximately 150 different capital schemes and projects being delivered by the council although there are 7 live projects that account for approximately 75% of the total spending within the programme. These are often described as ‘major’ schemes and are listed below, along with the total project allocations;

- £148m Metro West Rail project in Portishead
- £75m Banwell Bypass
- £34m Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)
- £28m Winterstoke Road Bridge in Weston
- £28m A38 Major Road Network improvements
- £23m Birnbeck Pier Construction Phase
- £12m Tropicana Development (LUF & CDF)

When looking at the investment programme it is important to understand how the spending plans will be funded, i.e. where the money will be coming from and when it will be received because the council must ensure that all decisions relating to capital are fully integrated into the annual revenue budget. Calculations must be carried out to show that spending plans are affordable and sustainable into the future.

Most of the funding for the current capital programme is due to come from external grants and contributions (£322m), although a 21% of the programme (i.e. £99m) will be financed from borrowing, with the remaining funding coming from reserves, revenue and capital receipts.

The repayment of this borrowing must be reflected within the council’s medium term financial plan (MTFP) and future revenue budget calculations to ensure that it can be funded within the context of those plans.

Developing an investment programme for the future also provides an opportunity to look back at projects that the council has successfully delivered, and which can be seen and used by residents in their local communities each day. Examples of projects that are near to completion or which have been recently completed include;

3.1.1 Special Education Needs Programme in schools

We have now completed 22 of the 24 capital schemes agreed with the Department for Education (DfE) as part of the Safety Valve Programme, with the following projects completed during 2025:

- The Christchurch CE Primary School opened the doors on its new Nurture Group in June 2025 and cost £291k. The new facility provides a focused space for children

who may experience social, emotional and behavioural difficulties whilst in mainstream education and enhances their learning experiences.

- The Nurture Group at Ashcombe Nursery was handed over in July 2025 and cost £198k. Approximately £62k under budget.
- The Resource Base at Hannah More Infant and Grove Junior Schools was also completed in July 2025 at a cost of £800k. Resource bases provide specialist teaching and therapeutic support for children with additional needs in a setting within a mainstream school.
- The Resource Base at Priory Community School Academy was handed over in August 2025 and cost just under £600k.

Each of these facilities helps the council to support more children who may experience difficulties with their learning within a mainstream educational setting.

3.1.2 Other school related projects

The council has been working to develop its plans to replace the current Voyage Learning Campus' secondary site, which is currently operating from a leased industrial building on the Oldmixon Industrial estate. The potential new site is at Locking Head Drove, which is land owned by the council although temporarily leased to Weston College who use it as the location for the Weston Construction Centre. The lease on this site ends in October 2026.

The council has been supporting the DfE to develop plans to build a new school facility in Churchill. The DfE hope to be on site in the next few months to start the Lime Hills Academy's which is due to open in September 2027.

3.1.3 Hutton Moor Leisure Centre

A £2.7m project is currently underway at the council's Hutton Moor Leisure Centre, part of which has been funded from the governments' public sector decarbonisation scheme. This is a technical scheme and is focused on replacing the 6 gas boilers at the leisure centre and replacing these with air source heat pumps, which removes all reliance on gas from the leisure centre.

The project will save over 340 tonnes of carbon emissions per year and is a positive step reducing the council's emissions. The works to the building have taken place, with minimal impact to the users of the leisure centre and they have been able to see the council's commitment to reducing emissions, whilst also seeing improvements to the building such as new heating system and radiators.

The project has progressed as planned and is in the final stages of delivery, which the commissioning of the new heat pumps due to take place in February 26, following the remaining connection works from National Grid.

The project is being managed by Parkwood Project Management, and is currently on time and within budget, which is a positive outcome given the complicated nature of all elements involved in the project. Regular meetings with Salix who monitor the fund and regular financial draw downs, support the funding of this project. Without the external funding, a project of this scale and nature, would unlikely be delivered due to affordability.

3.1.4 Swimming Pool Support Fund Grant

In addition to the funding secured for photo-voltaic (PV) panels for Hutton Moor leisure centre, the council also secured £140k of funding on behalf of Portishead Open Air Swimming Pool community Trust to provide solar thermal panels to heat the swimming pool and PV panels.

These works not only help to reduce carbon emissions but also help to reduce utility costs which have substantially increased over the last few years. The reduction in costs support the long-term sustainability of a very popular community asset in North Somerset. The outdoor pool also compliments the other water spaces within the area, such as leisure centres and marine lakes, all of which provide a varied programme of opportunities for people to take part in physical activity.

3.1.5 Zero Emission Bus Regional Area

The £14.9m ring-fenced funding has delivered depot infrastructure and 24 new buses in Weston-super-Mare as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The BSIP is our plan for joined-up packages of improvements to make our bus network better, stronger and more stable. It will give residents bus services they can use, afford and rely on throughout their lives. See our [2025 BSIP vision document](#) for more details.

The new 78-seater double decker buses transport about 20,000 passengers per week on two key services in North Somerset; the X1 (Weston to Bristol) and X4 (Portishead to Bristol). Each bus saves about 75 tonnes of CO2 each year – the equivalent to taking 54 cars off the road. This is part of a wider commitment by FirstBus to have a zero-emission fleet by 2035 – and this project covers 1/3 of the fleet in the FirstBus Weston-super-Mare depot.

Other Benefits:

- At the depot there are three huge gantries, installed by Magnus Construction Group, at the two-football pitch-sized site just off the A370 on the edge of the town, power the area's 24 new electric buses – more than a third of First Bus's Weston bus fleet. The electrified depots will also provide facilities for local companies to charge their electric vehicles, and bring green employment and training opportunities, including upskilling the existing engineering team, and providing engineering apprenticeship opportunities for local people as well as opportunities to become a driver of the new, state of the art buses.
- The buses have USB charging points for each seat, a camera monitoring system instead of wing mirrors for added safety and a smoother, quieter and more reliable ride for passengers.

3.1.6 Traffic Signals Obsolescence (TSOG)

With the phasing out of non-LED traffic signal heads and the 2G mobile network, government funding has been made available to retrofit sites with LED signal heads that are in good condition or refurbish sites nearing the end of life. All sites are being upgraded to 4G and connecting them to our Urban Traffic Control system will enable the council to provide more responsive and effective traffic management during future events and incidents.

By the end of the financial year 17 sites will have been retrofitted with LED traffic signals and 1 junction and 2 pedestrian crossings will have been refurbished.

3.1.7 LUF – Levelling Up Fund

LUF: the Levelling Up Fund has now been renamed the Local Regeneration Fund, representing a £23m programme of investments in Weston-super-Mare to boost the

economy, support the town centre and improve public realm. The programme comprises six projects which complement each other:

- **High Street improvements:** the refurbishment of empty shops is nearly complete. The first unit was completed in the summer and was immediately occupied by Warrens Bakery, bringing a new attraction to the high street
- **Grove Park:** this project is well underway. The demolition of the dated 70s toilet block has been completed and replaced with a modern unit, and work to re-pave and improve the entrance way is advanced. Completion is expected in the Spring when a launch event is planned for local communities.
- **Marine Lake:** the Marine Lake scheme will see the resurfacing and improvement of the areas around the lake, as well as providing new toilet and concession spaces. Completion is due in Spring 2026.
- **Birnbeck and Tropicana** – LUF is one of the funding elements of the capital projects, and these projects will continue into 2026/27 and beyond.
- **Wayfinding:** improvements to signage and other wayfinding have recently completed, smartening up the town centre and helping direct visitors to a range of destinations. An audio tour has also been put in place.

The contracts for delivery of the projects have incorporated significant Social Value benefits, including improvements to local footpaths, skills and training support, community engagement and cultural activity.

3.1.8 Housing – delivered by partners

Targets for Affordable Housing delivery have been exceeded for the fourth year in a row, with over 200 new affordable homes across North Somerset. This has included homes delivered through the Council's Development Programme, as well as government grant-funded housing for a small number of Afghani and Ukrainian refugees granted the right to live permanently in the UK. Work continues with our partner Registered Providers and Homes England to ensure a continued pipeline going forwards.

3.1.9 Warm Homes Grant

The council has been working in a consortium with Bristol City Council and Bath and North East Somerset Council to support the delivery of low-carbon, energy-efficient, and cost-saving measures for homes across the 3 Local Authority areas. This project follows a successful bid to Dept of Energy Security and Net Zero, and the scheme went live in November 2025 and runs until March 2028 – it will deliver the retrofit of 577 traditionally build homes and 70 Park Homes.

This scheme builds on the success of the previous Home Upgrade Grants and Local Authority Delivery Schemes which delivered over 150 retrofits in traditional build properties in North Somerset and insulated 118 Park Homes.

3.1.10 Investment in waste & recycling vehicles

Replacement of recycling and waste vehicles coincided with the introduction of 3-weekly waste collections and a more comprehensive recycling service. The 33 new multistream recycling vehicles were configured to allow for the collection of all the previous materials (paper, card, glass, plastic, food, small batteries, small electricals, spectacles) but included the addition of a soft plastics compartment, with compaction, to allow for collection of this material from all kerbside properties and made North Somerset the first council in England to introduce this collection across the Authority area. All the vehicles, except for one electric, are

diesel powered but they are designed to allow for mid-term refurbishment into electric and the timing of this will coincide with the availability of the new waste depot which will have the necessary charging infrastructure.

Most waste collection vehicles purchased, except for one electric, were 'nearly new' and diesel powered. This allows for their replacement, circa 2030, to coincide with the new depot and electrification of the fleet.

The purchase of these vehicles has allowed North Somerset to exceed the Government's Simpler Recycling requirements and has ensured that the introduction of 3-weekly waste collections has reduced the amount of waste collected by around 10%, increased recycling, and made financial and carbon savings

3.1.11 Development Programme –

Uplands / Elm Grove, Nailsea: 52 high-quality Passivhaus homes have been completed and transferred to Alliance Homes as affordable housing and are largely occupied. Our development partner, Stonewood Homes, is now rolling out the technology and standards used at Uplands in their own private-market schemes. Alliance are closely monitoring the energy usage and resident experience of the Passivhaus homes, which will help inform our collective investment decisions going forward.

Parklands Village: delivery continues of 425 homes at Parkland Village including 30% that will be Net Zero. All homes will meet a good standard of sustainability and design. Many are now occupied, with over 30% being affordable, a much higher percentage than in adjoining development schemes.

Castlewood, Walliscote Place and Dolphin Square: work continues to bring forward planning and delivery options for these complex sites, which overall will deliver around 250 homes of which the significant majority are expected to be affordable.

The Development Programme also generate positive financial receipts, with £15m secured to date which will be used to help deliver other council and community priorities.

1.4 Monitoring and changes to the current capital programme

1.4.1 Monitoring of the current financial programme

Appendix 1 provides details of all schemes currently included within the latest programme and the presentation shows the approved budgets currently allocated to each project, how much has been spent in-year and how the project will be financed when it has been delivered.

The monitoring, which was completed at the end of November, shows that the council has so far spent £53.381m and made further financial commitments of £158.527m, making total spending decisions of £211.907m during the year, some of which will be realised in later years.

The budget monitoring table also includes a RAG rated assessment for each project which is aligned to the council's risk management framework; projects without an assessment at this stage is either yet to be started or are awaiting their assessment to be validated by the Capital Programme, Planning and Delivery Board (CPPDB). Exception reports are required to be

submitted to the CPPD Board for items that have a red status so that issues can be clearly understood and escalated within the organisation and reported through our governance framework. There are no changes to the status these projects from the update previously shared with the Cabinet, which was at the meeting in December 2025.

1.4.2 Changes made to the current capital programme

Appendix 2 lists all the changes which have been made to the programme during the current financial year, which require retrospective approval from the Cabinet.

Some of these changes have been through separate decision-making processes due to their scale, for example the increased funding for Banwell Bypass, or because of procurement and commissioning plans, whilst others of a smaller scale have been through the director or Section 151 governance decision making process in accordance with financial regulations. The appendix provides a comprehensive list of all changes.

A further table at the bottom of the Appendix shows an aggregated position for all the changes that have taken place during the year, and the most significant change relates to updating the anticipated payment profile of the planned investment.

The budget for the current financial year has been reduced by £168m due to re-profiling activity, and this sum has been moved into later years. This means that whilst the council is now reporting actual spend to date of 30% for the year, this proportion would have been much lower without the changes and could be seen as a cause for concern in terms of the council being able to effectively plan its' finances.

Most re-profiling changes that have been made relate to some of the council's 'major' schemes which are often approved with an indicative spending profile, which is later updated when detailed delivery plans are being formulated. The council will continue to review the timing of capital spending plans and may make further changes in future reports to ensure that forecasts are robust and that slippage levels are reduced as much as possible. This would also apply to planned spending currently profiled for delivery in 2026/27.

1.4.3 Current capital programme

Tropicana – Demolition works have started at the Tropicana and the council are in discussions with a preferred operator. Construction works are expected to start later in 2026 following a review of the final scope of works, designs and updated costings.

Birnbeck – Following a challenging period in the summer, funding was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund to allow this scheme to go forward, matched by monies from Historic England, the Heritage Memorial Fund and the Local Regeneration Fund. Works to improve the derelict buildings on the landside are well advanced and will provide space for information and retail offerings. The work on the pier itself commenced in January and will complete in 2027.

1.5 New spending to be included within the capital programme – external funding

Appendix 3 provides a summary of the council's **new** investment proposals that are included within the report for approval into the capital programme as part of the annual budget setting

process, these plans will be in addition to all the current spending plans and changes described above.

All these investment proposals will be funded by government grants which means that there is no requirement for the council to identify additional capital resources.

Details of new funding allocations have been shared by the government over recent weeks and months and this report provides an opportunity to bring them all into the council's capital programme before the start of the new financial year.

Further details are provided below although several areas will already be known about as they are a continuation of existing schemes or initiatives.

These are only the grants that we are aware of at the time of writing although we are hopeful that we will receive further SEND funding and Schools Conditional allocations shortly. Future allocations will be added to the capital programme when received using the appropriate financial governance mechanism.

1.5.1 Local Authority Bus Grant (previously Bus service improvement plan (BSIP))

The council has received notification of the grants it will receive to support the Local Authority Bus Services/BSIP programme for the period 2026/27 – 2029/30 which will be an extension to the current programme this equates to £5.382m and has been allocated to support capital spending and will therefore be added to the capital programme.

The annual bus grant will be used to continue the council's investment in bus infrastructure, and it is expected that a range of capital interventions will help to reduce bus journey times, improve service reliability, and improve passenger facilities and experience. Improving facilities for buses will increase their patronage, helping to achieve the council's decarbonisation targets, and help to reduce the reliance on revenue-supported commercial bus services.

1.5.2 Highways maintenance – (Department for Transport grant funding)

The confirmation of multi-year transport funding allocations for the period 2026/27 to 2029/30 provides North Somerset Council with a strong and stable platform for long-term planning, investment and delivery across both highways' maintenance and integrated transport.

Over the four-year period, the council is expected to receive a total of £48.1m in transport-related grant funding. This includes;

- £36.0m for highways maintenance (baseline and Incentive Fund combined), and
- £11.0m through the Local Transport Grant,

A further £1.1m of funding will be received via the Active Travel Capability Fund although this is a revenue grant and so will not feature within the capital programme plans.

Highways Maintenance - totals £36.0m over the four years, comprising:

- £26.2m baseline Highway Maintenance Block funding, and
- £9.8m through the Highway Maintenance Incentive Fund.

Annual maintenance funding increases significantly across the period, from £7.4m in 2026/27 to £10.7m in 2029/30, reflecting both rising baseline allocations and continued qualification for Incentive Fund payments.

This level of funding certainty supports a shift away from short-term, reactive maintenance towards a planned, preventative and asset-led approach, enabling the Council to:

- Develop coherent multi-year maintenance programmes
- Target treatments at the optimal point in the asset lifecycle
- Improve whole-life value for money and network resilience

From a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) perspective, the four-year settlement significantly improves forward financial planning, reducing volatility and allowing highways investment to be aligned with affordability and corporate priorities.

The funding profile also provides confidence to invest in internal capacity and capability, including the appropriate capitalisation of client, commissioning, asset management and scheme development roles, supporting workforce planning, skills retention and delivery efficiency, while reducing reliance on short-term or external support.

Continued receipt of Incentive Fund allocations is dependent on maintaining strong performance against DfT self-assessment criteria. The stability provided by multi-year funding directly supports this by enabling consistent governance, robust asset management practices, and evidence-based decision-making.

Integrated Transport – provides £11.0m of capital funding over the 4 years through the Local Transport Grant, and a further £1.1m through the Active Travel Capability Fund.

Local Transport Grant allocations increase significantly over the period, from £1.1m in 2026/27 to £4.2m in 2029/30, enabling the Council to plan and develop integrated transport schemes on a multi-year basis rather than relying on annual funding cycles.

1.5.3 Active Travel Grant

The annual active travel grant will be used to continue the council's investment in active travel. A range of capital interventions will develop and construct walking, wheeling and cycling facilities. Improving facilities for active travel will help to achieve the council's decarbonisation, road safety and public health objectives. Revenue funding supports network planning and early scheme design plus community engagement and training activities.

1.5.4 Disabled facilities grants (DFG's)

The council has a statutory duty to approve mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) for major adaptations, ranging from shower grips, handrails to major adaptations depending on the need, this work supports people of all ages to live in suitable housing so they can remain independent, which can also help to reduce hospital admissions and / or help to contain the potential increase in demand for social care support.

Each year the government provides councils with funding for DFG's and since 2015 the allocation has been specified via the Better Care Fund (BCF) and is for the provision of adaptations to disabled people's homes to help them to live independently for longer. This commitment to provide ongoing funding in this area encourages council to think strategically about the use of home aids/adaptations, use of technologies to support people in their own homes, and to take a joined-up approach to improving outcomes across health, social care and housing.

1.5.5 Local Authority Housing Fund

The Government is committed to ensuring that councils can once again build at scale and is putting in place a range of measures to support this, alongside the LAHF and the SAHP, including the ten-year social housing rent settlement, reforms to the Right to Buy Scheme, and the new Council Housebuilding Skills and Capacity Programme.

The objectives of the grant are:

- Reduce local housing pressures and use of expensive and unsuitable accommodation, by providing better quality temporary accommodation to those owed homelessness duties by local authorities.
- Provide sustainable settled housing for some families on the Afghan Resettlement Programme (ARP) so that they can build new lives in the UK, find employment and integrate into communities.
- Support local housing markets by assisting the delivery of new housing stock or new developments to grow overall housing supply.

1.6 New spending to be included within the capital programme – council funding

Given that the council has extensive pressures within the annual revenue budget it is carefully considering how much additional borrowing it can afford to set aside to fund new capital spending over the next year.

Projects will only be included within the capital programme that meet the strict criteria described above and have been fully assessed as viable through a feasibility and business case process. The council currently only has one project that meets these criteria, which relates to planned repairs to the car park in Carlton Street, Weston.

Car park in Carlton Street – the upper floors of the car park are currently closed due to health and safety related concerns whilst engineering and structural assessments are being made. These closures not only affect residents and visitors who would like to be able to use the car park but they also impact on the council financially because less income is being received.

The proposed capital project will deliver a range of remediation works and are expected to address the capacity of upper floors, replacement of lifts, lighting, alarms, remedial works to resolve water ingress and other maintenance works.

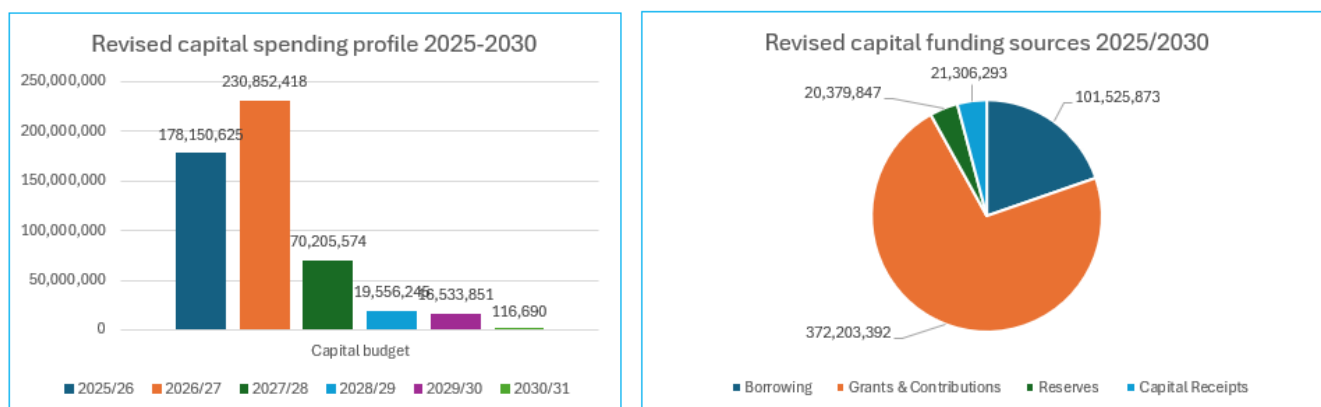
These works will reinstate the operational performance of the site and once again provide a facility for use by residents and visitors. At this time the capital costs are estimated to be £2.75m and will be met from service funded borrowing, although further due diligence on the project scope and cost will be undertaken before any works can start.

Other capital spending plans will continue to be reviewed and assessed using the governance framework and criteria through the year, with approvals for additional spending being reflected within future Cabinet reports.

1.7 Summary of capital spending 2025 to 2030, including all proposals

Appendix 5 provides details of the revised investment programme for the period 2025 to 2030 after the inclusion of the new items described within sections 3.5 and 3.6 of the report.

This would bring the total capital spending to **£515.415m**. The charts below confirm the council's commitment and ambition in investing in the area to deliver real change within our local communities.



The chart shows that a large element of the programme will be funded by external partners following a range of successful bids to government departments, which does reduce the amount that needs to be borrowed and included within the annual revenue budget however, that sum is still significant and will impact on the amount of money that the council can spend to deliver services. The impact of the borrowing requirement has been included within the council's medium term financial plan and is deemed to be affordable.

1.8 Pipeline projects

In addition to the specific items noted throughout the report to be included within the capital programme, the council is aware that other investment plans are likely to be forthcoming in the future although we recognise that these will take time to properly develop. These plans will be subject to the usual governance process, which do vary depending on the size and scope of planned spending and funding sources. Examples of the council's current pipeline spending plans include the following;

- **Voyage Learning Campus (VLC) Replacement** – the current VLC at Oldmixon Industrial Estate, is currently leased, and over the years as service requirements have changed, the site is no longer fit for purpose. The service provision for secondary-aged Pupil Referral Unit is an Alternative Provision (AP) school that provides for pupils in years 1 – 11 across two sites. It supports schools in meeting the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties when children are out of school. This includes Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), hospital schools or other forms of provision accessed via the local authority or directly by schools to deliver the statutory duty to provide education for such pupils.

Continuing with our new High Needs programme, we have commissioned consultants and have developed the brief and high-level cost plans to build a replacement site for the VLC's secondary-aged pupils at Locking Head Drove. This c £16 - 17m scheme will be developed ready for Council consideration in the spring 2026.

A failure to have a site for these young people children would mean that NSC would risk not fulfilling its statutory duty as places would need to be secured at more costly independent schools elsewhere in the county.

The aim is to provide a new build provision that meets current service need the capital costs are currently being validated, along with the impacts on revenue (home to school transport, and out of area placements) and the capital costs are likely to be in excess of £15m, which will be funded from S106 receipts, High Needs capital grant, and basic need grants. If the scheme is to be approved, it will require Council approval due to the financial impacts.

- **Waste Depot** – A range of waste related services are currently delivered from two locations both operated by the North Somerset Environment Company (NSEC). These include the Waste Transfer Station (WTS) at Aisecome Way which is owned by the council and the Waste Depot, based at the Westlands Distribution site on Winterstoke Road.

The current Depot contains the core waste and recycling collection facilities including workshops, welfare facilities, offices, fleet parking, recycling transfer and processing operations. This site is currently leased although is nearing the end of its term.

A full business case is currently being prepared which will validate the design and costs from the outline business case which sought to assess the viability and benefits of designing and building a new waste depot to enable service continuity and support transformation. The indicative costs at that stage were estimated to be £35m and so would require full Council approval to progress should this be identified as a viable and affordable proposition and the council's top priority.

- **Transformation** – as a council we need to continue to transform the way we work, whether through digitalisation, the way we utilise and procure services, how we provide services or how we work with others in the future. Whilst we can see these transformation activities will deliver cashable financial benefits in the future, we know that transformation related projects are likely to require an upfront capital investment to ensure that we are able to meet statutory duties and continue to provide local services before we deliver financial savings.

It is expected that requests will come through the usual capital and transformation governance routes, and any approvals will be subject to a detailed business case.

- **A38 / Major Road Network (MRN) (including Downside Road)** – the council's existing capital programme already includes provision to improve the road infrastructure along the A38 corridor, in a joint scheme with Somerset Council.

The status of the A38 MRN project is that we are anticipating Full Business Case submission to DfT following our April Council meeting. DfT have anticipated a 3-month review period and if acceptance is granted within this timeframe, we would be looking to formally accept construction funding and update the capital programme at the September Council meeting.

The Downside Road, construction cost plans will also be reviewed by Bristol Airport around March/April this year and once accepted we will be able to finalise the S106 funding total to cover construction/Stage 2 of the element of the project. Current plans are to formalise this as part of the September Council decision.

- **Family Hubs** – the way we provide services is transforming, and considerable work has been progressed to start to identify new Family Hub sites across North Somerset as part of the move, in line with government policy, from offering Children's Centre Services for 0 – 5-year-olds to Family Hubs for 0 – 19-year-olds (and to aged 25 for children with

SEND). Condition reports have been requested for all sites, and these will form part of a wider decision to determine which of the current 14 sites will be enhanced, maintained, or disposed of going forward. Whilst exact costs for the condition updates and changes in use have not been assessed, early indicative costs could mean that funds in the region of £5 - £6m over a 3-year programme may be needed however, each proposal will be subject to a detailed business case and prioritised to ensure that costs remain within the scope of available council funding.

- **Highway works at Wakedean Gardens** – the council has been working with residents of Wakedean Gardens in Yatton to develop a project which will see a range of repairs made to the private road and pavements in the area. The road is currently unadopted and in a very poor state of repair, meaning there is a risk that the council cannot meet its statutory duty to collect waste from these properties. If approved, the council would undertake the works on behalf of residents and adopt to road. Homeowners have the responsibility to pay for the works and arrangements would be put in place to recover a financial contribution from each property. Full details will be shared as part of the council's usual governance processes.

1.9 Horizon scanning and future capital changes

Over the coming months it is likely that the council will review various service related strategies, and new government legislation which could result in further requests for capital funding. Examples of these are noted below however, given the lack of available resources, decisions would remain subject to due diligence and prioritisation to ensure that the council maximises the value of its investment plans.

- Leisure Assets,
- Strategic Asset Management Programme,
- Disposal Programme
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan

1.10 Capital Risks

The current capital programme contains various risks that are considered and reviewed as part of the monitoring and board reviews of the individual projects. Mitigations are also considered. Material risks and mitigations are noted below.

RISKS
Cost overruns, inflation and market volatility, that is not accounted for within the project or contingency allocations.
Funding shortfalls, or delays in receiving funding allocations. Grants, s106 receipts or notifications from governing bodies.
Compliance with funding terms and conditions/timescales.
The investment does not deliver value for money over its whole life
Financial risks associated with safety and regulatory compliance – particularly with any new legislation and the fact that NSC has an aging asset base.
Financing of the capital investment
Risk of overall levels of capital investment are not affordable
Financial governance and oversight
Projects initiated with grant/external funding without due diligence, resulting in a financial risk if no further funding is available.
Resources – availability or loss of key personnel impacts the Councils ability to fulfil its

commitments.
Projects not fully costed/thought through/communicated prior to commencement.
Grant funding applied for and accepted without the project being fully costed, leaving the Council with a funding shortfall if no additional funding is available.
Affordability

MITIGATIONS
Due to the nature of the work and spend profile of capital projects, estimating costs at early stages is inherently challenging, especially when assessing underlying asset condition to assess inflation requirements and any possible cost overruns. These are largely managed with the use of professional advisors (internal and external) that help estimate the likely inflation, using their local knowledge to build the initial estimates, these are then reported and mitigations where possible are identified on an ongoing basis.
The use of “lessons learned” at the end of projects, gives teams the chance to reflect on whether the capital investment is delivering against its original project objectives. The use of the “lessons learned” from previous /similar type/scale of projects helps provide an insight and makes sure that current projects are heading in the right direction.
The introduction of CPPDB and project boards helping to keep the focus and awareness of projects progress and finances on a more regular basis.
Project managers taking more accountability for spending plans and whole life forecasts.
Dedicated finance staff for each capital project – who monitor on a risk base approach.
More early-stage feasibility spending, so that there are clear gateways on the decisions on next phase/s of projects.

4. Consultation

The government, through its legislative framework, clearly expects that local authorities will be able to demonstrate that they have in place mechanisms to ensure that 'representatives of local people' are being appropriately informed, consulted or involved in services, policies or decisions that affect or interest them.

There are many aspects when planning for and delivering investments within communities that impact on our residents, customers, businesses and other stakeholders, and so we recognise that it is our responsibility to ensure that any changes we make to them through the capital budget, need to be considered and consulted upon. Failure to do so adequately could result in aspects of the budget being subject to legal challenge.

Publication of the council's draft budget plans along with details of the core assumptions supports the objective of the Cabinet to be as transparent as possible.

Adopting an iterative approach to detailed capital spending plans during 2026/27 will enable the council to ensure that sufficient time can be given to engaging with local communities and other stakeholders prior to decisions being made.

The report has been developed through consultation with the council's corporate leadership team, and also with each of the departmental leadership teams. Discussions and briefings on financial matters are an established part of the relationships with directors and Cabinet Members. Financial reports are also considered in more detail at the relevant policy and scrutiny panels

5. Financial Implications

Financial implications are contained throughout the Capital Strategy report and have been aligned with a series of other reports that are also on the agenda for this meeting, with the main ones being Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Treasury Management Strategy.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

The Local Government Act 1972 lays down the fundamental principle by providing that every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs including balancing their budgets each year from within their own resource allocations, although further details and requirements are contained within related legislation.

The Council has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2022 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires it to approve a Capital Strategy before the start of each financial year.

Under this guidance, the role of the (Full) Council is to:

- Set the budget and capital programme, including debt and investment interest, and the repayment of capital (also known as the Minimum Revenue Provision)
- Approve the Capital Strategy
- Approve the Treasury Management Strategy
- Approve a series of Prudential Indicators

Under the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, local authorities must not delegate the approval of an annual strategy to any committee or person.

The role of the Cabinet is to consider these strategies, and, if appropriate, recommend them for approval by full Council.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

We are committed to ensuring that all projects within our capital programme align with our refreshed Corporate Plan and will continue to be Open, Fair and Green. Our target is to be a net-zero Council by 2030, to achieve this we need to ensure that carbon impacts of our investments are made clear and evaluated through options appraisal. Carbon impact will become a core element of our decision making so that we can achieve our climate change objectives.

8. Risk Management

In setting the capital budgets for the future the council must consider the known key financial risks that may affect its plans, and these will either be explicitly provided for within the base budget or be offset and held against the unallocated contingency budget or the council's general fund working balance.

The council's Strategic Risk Register currently includes two main risks linked to the council's capital financing position although there is an emerging risk which relates to the broader finances.

Risk	Inherent risk score	Residual Likelihood	Residual Impact	Residual Risk Score	Comments
The council is unable to deliver capital projects within the approved resource envelope either due to unmanageable cost increases and/or lack of governance	HIGH	3	4	HIGH	This reflects the current position regarding inflation on schemes and potential changes to scope since budgets were set. Embed a culture of fully costed, evidence-based business plans prior to approval, supported by effective procurement processes
Capital grants and funding streams not known / susceptible to change	HIGH	3	4	HIGH	Lobby government to request that funding allocations shared prior to the start of the financial year
The council is unable to continue to delivery statutory services within the resources it has available to it	HIGH	4	4	VERY HIGH	This could potentially be the position if the council is unable to resolve its financial difficulties in the current year meaning that it may not be able to balance the budget in the current financial year and set and approve a balanced budget in future years. It should be noted that no such assessment is likely at this stage as there are many uncertainties and outstanding workstreams

Delivering an investment programme of this scale will expose the council to many forms of risk and whilst the strategic elements are noted above, the capital governance arrangements have put in place arrangements to understand and monitor these in more detail for each project, whether in feasibility stage however there are similarities across projects and so these are documented and regularly assessed as part of the council's risk management framework.

The strategic risk register, which is shared on the council's website, includes specific reference capital investment although the main risks are noted below;

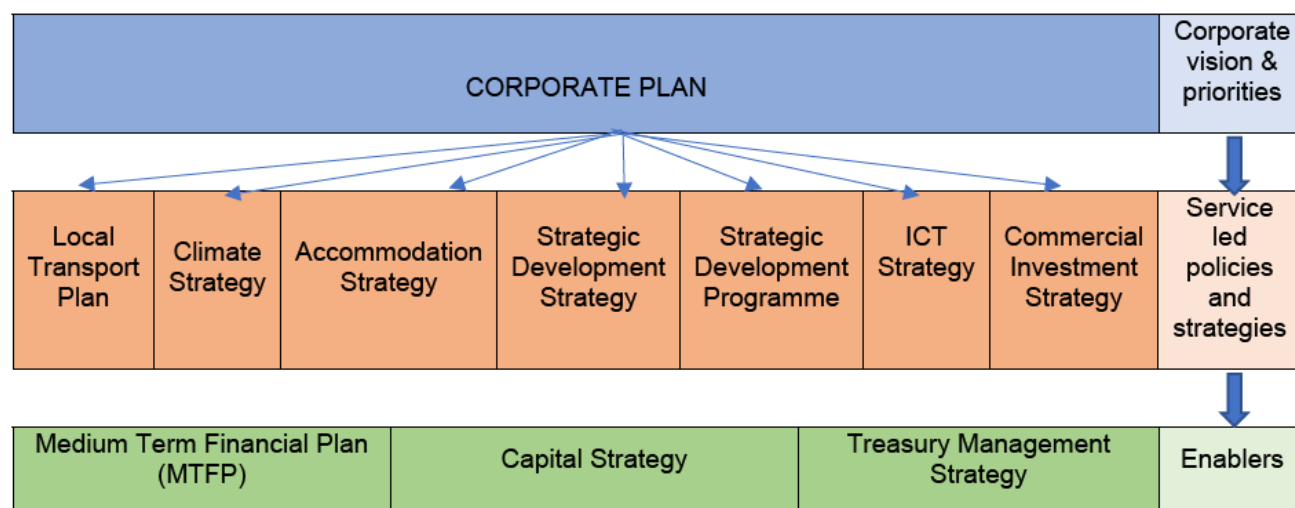
- Lack of funding - to support changes within the existing capital programme and also develop new spending proposals or fund urgent works
- Inflation and procurement risks – risk of increased spending on current projects or those within the pipeline and being developed and/or the subject of external bids
- Timing of expenditure for schemes that are funded by external grants and which have conditions attached to their funding
- Timing of expenditure for schemes that are funded by borrowing to ensure that the impact on the revenue budget is robust
- Uncertainties within projects that may be outside of our control, for example planning decisions, land transfers, external stakeholders, weather conditions etc
- Broader economic and world events, which may impact on the cost of materials or capacity within the marketplace, viability of suppliers etc

9. Equality Implications

There are many aspects relating to the investment priorities within the council's capital strategy, as well as the delivery of the individual capital projects within the overall programme, which impact on our residents, customers and other stakeholders and members of the public, and so we recognise that it is our responsibility to ensure that any investments we make through the capital budget, may need to be considered and consulted upon. There are no specific equality implications to note at this time although capital projects will be assessed at an individual level through the approvals processes.

10. Corporate Implications

The Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) are vital tools to help align effort across the organisation and ensure that services are all are focused on delivery to agreed community and organisational priorities. With continuing financial pressures and demands for services and deteriorating condition of our asset base, it is essential that the councils' limited resources continue to be prioritised and allocated in line with the identified priorities and changes reflected within the budget where required and the Capital Strategy is an enabler to support this.



11. Options Considered

Council is required to formally approve a Capital Strategy for 2026/27 and this could be undertaken as a multi-year strategy or a stand-alone annual process. Given that the council already has an existing capital programme which covers a multi-year period an approach has been taken to use the programme as an overarching baseline and then overlay any changes that may be required. This ensures that spending is aligned to the latest priorities and funding levels and that governance supporting decision-making and monitoring continues to be consistently and transparently applied.

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Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Monitoring of the 2025/26 Capital Programme,
- Appendix 2 Changes to the 2025/26 Capital Programme
- Appendix 3 New spending to be added to the Capital Programme – external funding
- Appendix 4 New spending to be added to the Capital Programme – council funding
- Appendix 5 Draft Capital Programme for 2026/27 onwards
- Appendix 6 Investment Property assets held by NSC
- Appendix 7 Glossary of terms

Background Papers:

Reports presented to the Cabinet:

- Capital & Treasury Management Strategy reports 2025/26 (February 2025)
- Budget monitoring report 2025/26 (September & October 2025)
- MTFP and Revenue Budget reports (September to December 2025)

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MONITORING OF 2025/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME								APPENDIX 1							
CAPITAL PROGRAMME	RAG rating	APPROVED BUDGET						MONITORING TO 30 November 2025			APPROVED FUNDING				
		2025/26 Profiled Spend £	2026/27 Profiled Spend £	2027/28 Profiled Spend £	2028/29 Profiled Spend £	2029/30 Profiled Spend £	TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET £	Actual Spend £	Orders £	TOTAL COSTS £	Borrowing £	Grants & Contributions £	Reserves & Revenue £	Capital Receipts £	TOTAL APPROVED FUNDING £
Adult Social Services & Housing	41%	7,727,170	1,875,000	1,875,000	0	0	11,477,169	2,706,109	456,720	3,162,829	421,498	6,053,334	502,338	4,500,000	11,477,170
Childrens Services	52%	10,098,112	15,007,469	2,250,000	1,524,559	0	28,880,139	2,251,305	2,989,686	5,240,991	2,953,453	23,059,178	2,867,508	0	28,880,138
Corporate Services	29%	2,911,469	3,376,000	1,130,000	0	0	7,417,469	537,082	305,959	843,040	3,682,204	242,815	2,053,843	1,438,607	7,417,469
Environment, Assets & Transport Services	149%	131,683,188	183,448,044	49,140,225	3,787,525	155,129	368,214,111	45,757,508	149,979,476	195,736,984	91,203,917	251,662,538	13,412,292	11,935,364	368,214,111
Healthy & Sustainable Communities	27%	25,730,689	16,866,531	3,172,440	0	0	45,769,660	2,129,125	4,795,025	6,924,149	514,801	40,257,818	1,564,720	3,432,321	45,769,660
TOTAL SPENDING	119%	178,150,627	220,573,043	57,567,665	5,312,084	155,129	461,758,548	53,381,128	158,526,865	211,907,993	98,775,873	321,275,682	20,400,700	21,306,293	461,758,548
ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING															
Adult social care accommodation shift		187,024	0	0	0	0	187,024	0	0	0	0	182,461	4,563	0	187,024
Aids & Adaptations Equipment	G	400,000	0	0	0	0	400,000	0	0	0	0	400,000	0	0	400,000
Housing & Technology Fund	G	5,813	0	0	0	0	5,813	0	0	0	0	5,813	0	0	5,813
Social Care Projects	G	358,674	0	0	0	0	358,674	5,300	0	5,300	0	159,354	199,320	0	358,674
Disabled Facilities Grants	G	2,530,217	0	0	0	0	2,530,217	1,591,679	257,720	1,849,398	0	2,530,217	0	0	2,530,217
Other Private Sector Renewal	G	18,029	0	0	0	0	18,029	33,693	0	33,693	0	18,029	0	0	18,029
Social Housing Grants	G	693,498	0	0	0	0	693,498	0	0	0	421,498	75,000	197,000	0	693,498
Social Housing Grant - S106	G	60,000	0	0	0	0	60,000	0	0	0	0	0	60,000	0	60,000
Repurchase Leasehold Properties	G	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	0	0	4,500,000	677,000	0	677,000	0	0	0	4,500,000	4,500,000
First Time Buyer Loan Scheme	G	35,000	0	0	0	0	35,000	0	0	0	0	0	35,000	0	35,000
Technology Enabled Care		750,000	0	0	0	0	750,000	0	0	0	0	750,000	0	0	750,000
Insulation of park homes	G	81,731	0	0	0	0	81,731	0	0	0	0	81,731	0	0	81,731
Warm Homes Local Grant		300,000	375,000	375,000	0	0	1,049,999	4,794	0	4,794	0	1,049,999	0	0	1,049,999
ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING - Completed Schemes															
Local Authority Housing Fund (Refugees)	C	807,184	0	0	0	0	807,184	393,644	199,000	592,644	0	800,729	6,455	0	807,184
		7,727,170	1,875,000	1,875,000	0	0	11,477,169	2,706,109	456,720	3,162,829	421,498	6,053,334	502,338	4,500,000	11,477,170
CORPORATE SERVICES															
ICT - Council Priorities - (Carelink)	G	0	1,000,000	1,000,000	0	0	2,000,000	0	2,680	2,680	700,000	0	0	1,300,000	2,000,000
Phones - Replacement Programme (Android)	G	211,935	0	0	0	0	211,935	0	0	0	211,935	0	0	0	211,935
Devices - Replacement Programme	G	473,828	200,000	0	0	0	673,828	25,150	17,696	42,846	673,828	0	0	0	673,828
ICT - Replacement Programme	G	6,812	0	0	0	0	6,812	2,152	0	2,152	6,812	0	0	0	6,812
ICT - Devices - Laptops (break fix & new starts)	G	176,000	116,000	0	0	0	292,000	152,460	15,968	168,428	292,000	0	0	0	292,000
ICT - Networks & Infrastructure	G	189,720	0	0	0	0	189,720	49,159	19,065	68,225	51,113	0	0	138,607	189,720
ICT - Security Tools	G	162,231	100,000	100,000	0	0	362,231	1,025	8,578	9,603	362,231	0	0	0	362,231
ICT - Windows 11 upgrade project	A	52,000	0	0	0	0	52,000	30,095	26,990	57,085	52,000	0	0	0	52,000
ICT - Jontec Carelink system	G	2,807	0	0	0	0	2,807	0	0	0	2,807	0	0	0	2,807
ICT - COntroCC - Provider Portal module	G	112,657	0	0	0	0	112,657	2,736	2,954	5,689	112,657	0	0	0	112,657
ICT - Customer Services	G	79,699	0	0	0	0	79,699	46,163	0	46,163	79,699	0	0	0	79,699
ICT - Purchase of e-store & Digital documentation	D	80,000	0	0	0	0	80,000	0	0	0	0	0	80,000	0	80,000
ICT - GIS / Mapping system projects	D	180,000	0	0	0	0	180,000	635	2,354	2,989	180,000	0	0	0	180,000
ICT - Highways Systems (Confirm, Scanworks, etc)	G	117,699	0	0	0	0	117,699	0	0	0	117,699	0	0	0	117,699
ICT - Information Programme	G	204,964	180,000	30,000	0	0	414,964	42,853	0	42,853	414,964	0	0	0	414,964
ICT - Agresso Development	G	150,000	150,000	0	0	0	300,000	68,448	13,233	81,681	300,000	0	0	0	300,000
Asset Related Activity - to be approved by Executive	D	0	1,630,000	0	0	0	1,630,000	0	0	0	0	0	1,630,000	0	1,630,000
Flax Bourton Mortuary	G	12,977	0	0	0	0	12,977	0	12,977	12,977	0	0	12,977	0	12,977
Sovereign Centre - Capital Programme	G	245,000	0	0	0	0	245,000	0	0	0	0	0	245,000	0	245,000
Accommodation Strategy	G	169,515	0	0	0	0	169,515	38,292	47,885	86,177	124,459	0	45,055	0	169,514
Eco Bus (library outreach vehicle (mobile replacement))	G	283,626	0	0	0	0	283,626	77,915	135,579	213,493	0	242,815	40,811	0	283,626
		2,911,469	3,376,000	1,130,000	0	0	7,417,469	537,082	305,959	843,040	3,682,204	242,815	2,053,843	1,438,607	7,417,469
											20,853				

MONITORING OF 2025/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME								APPENDIX 1							
CAPITAL PROGRAMME	RAG rating	APPROVED BUDGET						MONITORING TO 30 November 2025			APPROVED FUNDING				
		2025/26 Profiled Spend £	2026/27 Profiled Spend £	2027/28 Profiled Spend £	2028/29 Profiled Spend £	2029/30 Profiled Spend £	TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET £	Actual Spend £	Orders £	TOTAL COSTS £	Borrowing £	Grants & Contributions £	Reserves & Revenue £	Capital Receipts £	TOTAL APPROVED FUNDING £
CHILDRENS SERVICES															
Family Hubs - Locking Castle Children's Centre	G	191,305	0	0	0	0	191,305	0	0	0	0	0	191,305	0	191,305
Churchill Social Emotional & Mental Health - re	G	434,176	0	0	0	0	434,176	220	320,000	320,220	350,000	84,176	0	0	434,176
Ravenswood replacement de-mountable buildin	G	0	150,000	0	0	0	150,000	0	125,369	125,369	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
SEND / Safety Valve - Hans Price Academy - R	G	254,063	1,665,193	0	0	0	1,919,255	38,619	51,102	89,721	0	1,861,695	57,560	0	1,919,255
SEND / Safety Valve - VLC Milton	A	1,057,828	571,081	0	0	0	1,628,909	99,544	1,069,644	1,169,188	0	1,628,909	0	0	1,628,909
SEND / Safety Valve - St Martins	R	145,200	0	0	0	0	145,200	75,561	42,604	118,165	0	145,200	0	0	145,200
SEND / SV - VLC Oldmixon Replacement Site	A	498,475	1,750,000	0	0	0	2,248,475	215,198	36,797	251,995	1,018,889	1,229,586	0	0	2,248,475
SEND / Safety Valve - Nailsea School - RB	R	69,594	0	0	0	0	69,594	46,179	69,606	115,785	0	69,594	0	0	69,594
SEND / Safety Valve - Gordano School - RB	G	217,749	1,500,000	0	0	0	1,717,749	86,991	15,206	102,197	0	1,717,749	0	0	1,717,749
SEND / Safety Valve - Ravenswood Breach 20	G	314,500	0	0	0	0	314,500	139,234	0	139,234	0	314,500	0	0	314,500
Statutory Compliance	G	204,857	300,000	0	0	0	504,857	73,853	21,476	95,329	0	504,857	0	0	504,857
Breach Classes - additional primary school plac	D	0	2,250,000	2,250,000	1,524,559	0	6,024,559	0	0	0	0	6,024,559	0	0	6,024,559
Monitoring of Party Wall - Banwell Primary Sch	G	500,000	0	0	0	0	500,000	2,442	950	3,392	500,000	0	0	0	500,000
Haywood Village Primary - Green Agenda Plan	G	100,000	400,000	0	0	0	500,000	6,541	0	6,541	500,000	0	0	0	500,000
Clevedon Secondary School	D	342,735	3,500,000	0	0	0	3,842,735	0	3,603	3,603	0	3,842,735	0	0	3,842,735
Central Secondary - additional secondary scho	D	0	680,915	0	0	0	680,915	0	0	0	0	557,927	122,988	0	680,915
Land for Yatton Secondary	G	0	2,000,000	0	0	0	2,000,000	0	0	0	0	2,000,000	0	0	2,000,000
Childcare expansion - Early Years	D	350,149	0	0	0	0	350,149	0	0	0	0	350,149	0	0	350,149
Childrens Centre - Rolling Maintenance Progra	D	20,328	0	0	0	0	20,328	0	0	0	20,328	0	0	0	20,328
Devolved Formula Capital	G	0	0	0	0	0	0	35,204	0	35,204	0	0	0	0	0
Childrens Sufficiency - 1	D	1,117,000	0	0	0	0	1,117,000	8,867	1,950	10,817	0	0	1,117,000	0	1,117,000
Childrens Sufficiency - 2	D	883,000	0	0	0	0	883,000	0	0	0	0	0	883,000	0	883,000
CHILDRENS SERVICES - Completed Schemes															
CLOSED - SEND / Safety Valve - Crockerne P	C	6,102	0	0	0	0	6,102	6,760	0	6,760	0	6,102	0	0	6,102
Banwell Primary School	C	0	240,280	0	0	0	240,280	89	0	89	0	240,280	0	0	240,280
Kewstoke - Roof and other school updates	C	77,342	0	0	0	0	77,342	22,348	136	22,484	77,342	0	0	0	77,342
SEND / Safety Valve - EY/Ashcombe Childrens	C	221,933	0	0	0	0	221,933	156,310	10,451	166,762	0	221,933	0	0	221,933
SEND / Safety Valve - Locking Primary - RB	C	10,623	0	0	0	0	10,623	11,623	0	11,623	0	10,623	0	0	10,623
SEND / Safety Valve - Meadvale - NG	C	20,488	0	0	0	0	20,488	56	574	630	0	20,488	0	0	20,488
SEND / Safety Valve - St Andrews Primary NG	C	12,490	0	0	0	0	12,490	111	6,908	7,019	0	12,490	0	0	12,490
SEND / Safety Valve - Gordano NG	C	17,137	0	0	0	0	17,137	1,337	1,786	3,123	0	17,137	0	0	17,137
SEND / Safety Valve - Portishead Primary NG	C	12,988	0	0	0	0	12,988	56	1,954	2,009	0	2,010	10,977	0	12,987
SEND / Safety Valve - Hannah Moore - RB	C	924,036	0	0	0	0	924,036	699,988	42,214	742,202	0	924,036	0	0	924,036
SEND / Safety Valve -Priory Worle Secondary	C	566,062	0	0	0	0	566,062	311,786	71,405	383,191	94,885	471,177	0	0	566,062
SEND / Safety Valve - Christchurch - NG	C	724,598	0	0	0	0	724,598	185,245	73,274	258,519	0	724,598	0	0	724,598
Baytree (The Campus) - Roof/Boiler	C	242,009	0	0	0	0	242,009	774	0	774	242,009	0	0	0	242,009
Baytree Special School - Brookfield Walk Cleve	C	76,666	0	0	0	0	76,666	5,136	1,013,271	1,018,407	0	76,666	0	0	76,666
S106 Early Years Childcare Places	C	468,725	0	0	0	0	468,725	9,803	9,405	19,208	0	0	468,725	0	468,725
Winterstoke Hundred Academy Expansion (HIF	C	15,952	0	0	0	0	15,952	11,429	0	11,429	0	0	15,952	0	15,952
		10,098,112	15,007,469	2,250,000	1,524,559	0	28,880,139	2,251,305	2,989,686	5,240,991	2,953,453	23,059,178	2,867,508	0	28,880,138

MONITORING OF 2025/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME								APPENDIX 1							
CAPITAL PROGRAMME	RAG rating	APPROVED BUDGET						MONITORING TO 30 November 2025			APPROVED FUNDING				
		2025/26 Profiled Spend £	2026/27 Profiled Spend £	2027/28 Profiled Spend £	2028/29 Profiled Spend £	2029/30 Profiled Spend £	TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET £	Actual Spend £	Orders £	TOTAL COSTS £	Borrowing £	Grants & Contributions £	Reserves & Revenue £	Capital Receipts £	TOTAL APPROVED FUNDING £
ENVIRONMENT, ASSETS & TRANSPORT SERVICES															
Major Projects															
Winterstoke Rd Bridge	A	14,307,399	11,831,032	1,917,318	0	0	28,055,749	5,292,452	22,525,718	27,818,170	0	28,034,895	20,853	0	28,055,748
South Bristol Link Part 1 Claims	G	325,290	0	0	0	0	325,290	107,250	2,837	110,087	325,290	0	0	0	325,290
Metro West	A	17,977,064	89,657,141	36,543,736	3,614,745	155,129	147,947,815	1,165,365	68,635,737	69,801,102	62,530,000	81,061,094	990,000	3,366,721	147,947,815
Metro West Phase 2 EDF	A	1,546,016	0	0	0	0	1,546,016	-5,127	7,511	2,384	1,546,016	0	0	0	1,546,016
North South Link	G	201,580	0	0	0	0	201,580	23,866	29,218	53,084	0	0	0	201,580	201,580
Utilities at Parklands Village	A	117,000	0	0	0	0	117,000	0	34,868	34,868	0	0	117,000	0	117,000
HIF - Banwell Bypass	A	39,131,179	30,520,505	5,358,666	0	0	75,010,350	18,677,256	44,663,231	63,340,487	7,826,804	58,527,779	5,088,570	3,567,197	75,010,350
Major Road Network (A38) to FBC	G	2,153,945	21,396,523	4,320,505	172,780	0	28,043,753	249,537	1,299,904	1,549,441	0	26,220,133	1,823,619	0	28,043,752
Assets & Property															
Corporate Asset Management Plan	G	1,188,697	1,500,000	1,000,000	0	0	3,688,697	11,759	2,250	14,009	2,338,406	0	1,350,291	0	3,688,697
CAMP - Sandford Road Depot	G	81,256	0	0	0	0	81,256	2,399	70,441	72,840	81,256	0	0	0	81,256
CAMP - Clevedon Community Centre Ph3	G	23,750	0	0	0	0	23,750	221	0	221	22,404	0	1,346	0	23,750
CAMP - TH Air Conditioning	G	24,545	0	0	0	0	24,545	11,833	11,008	22,841	24,545	0	0	0	24,545
CAMP - Castlewood UPS	G	82,500	0	0	0	0	82,500	64,735	0	64,735	82,500	0	0	0	82,500
CAMP - Access Control System	G	462,000	0	0	0	0	462,000	364,127	49,987	414,114	462,000	0	0	0	462,000
CAMP - Lathe & Plaster Registrars	G	32,361	0	0	0	0	32,361	7,176	5,436	12,612	32,361	0	0	0	32,361
CAMP - Castlewood Roof Repairs	G	13,000	0	0	0	0	13,000	739	11,308	12,047	13,000	0	0	0	13,000
Locking Road CP Storage	G	59,288	0	0	0	0	59,288	45,993	1,318	47,311	29,688	0	29,600	0	59,288
Energy efficiency buildings - Invest to Save	D	500,000	0	0	0	0	500,000	0	0	0	500,000	0	0	0	500,000
Rooftop solar pilot - Invest to Save	D	100,000	0	0	0	0	100,000	0	0	0	100,000	0	0	0	100,000
Town Hall Fire Risk Assessments	G	238,466	0	0	0	0	238,466	124,821	86,417	211,238	0	0	238,466	0	238,466
Highways, Parking & Street Lighting															
Integrated Transport Schemes	G	1,540,691	1,344,471	0	0	0	2,885,162	453,123	219,308	672,431	0	2,836,558	48,604	0	2,885,162
Maintenance Schemes - funding to be allocated	G	8,403,451	5,558,101	0	0	0	13,961,552	2,504,871	2,478,587	4,983,458	0	12,481,530	0	1,480,022	13,961,552
Traffic Signals Obsolescence Grant	G	534,870	0	0	0	0	534,870	6,364	337,141	343,506	0	534,870	0	0	534,870
NSC Capital Unclassified Roads	G	3,491,588	0	0	0	0	3,491,588	976,143	1,409,981	2,386,124	0	2,955,983	0	535,606	3,491,589
Safe Routes to School	D	0	176,794	0	0	0	176,794	2,240	0	2,240	0	0	176,794	0	176,794
Clevedon Seafront - Phase 2	G	259,882	0	0	0	0	259,882	176,012	0	176,012	67,699	192,182	0	0	259,881
Highways Contract - Vehicles and Plant	G	279,530	0	0	0	0	279,530	198,263	0	198,263	279,530	0	0	0	279,530
Parking Schemes	D	35,716	0	0	0	0	35,716	0	0	0	35,716	0	0	0	35,716
Investment in Car Parks	G	410,584	0	0	0	0	410,584	78,321	49,146	127,467	400,000	0	10,584	0	410,584
Car Parking Strategy	G	493,322	0	0	0	0	493,322	112,411	25,004	137,414	493,322	0	0	0	493,322
Transport															
Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV)	G	231,590	0	0	0	0	231,590	2,475	37,193	39,668	21,284	210,306	0	0	231,590
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI)	G	0	851,000	0	0	0	851,000	0	0	0	0	851,000	0	0	851,000
Metrobus Contingency/ AVTM	G	119,548	170,935	0	0	0	290,483	0	0	0	290,483	0	0	0	290,483
Vivacity Traffic Counting Equipment	G	42,893	0	0	0	0	42,893	5,951	0	5,951	0	0	42,893	0	42,893
HTST Ravenswood School Parking	D	250,000	0	0	0	0	250,000	0	0	0	0	0	250,000	0	250,000
BSIP - Bus Priority Schemes	A	7,083,677	15,723,128	0	0	0	22,806,805	2,497,193	4,480,130	6,977,323	0	22,676,096	130,709	0	22,806,805
BSIP - Passenger Infrastructure	A	8,973,559	1,802,414	0	0	0	10,775,973	1,944,265	379,288	2,323,553	0	10,775,973	0	0	10,775,973
Purchase of DRT Vehicles	G	400,000	0	0	0	0	400,000	382,074	0	382,074	0	0	400,000	0	400,000
J21 Northbound Slip	A	2,186,416	0	0	0	0	2,186,416	1,138	0	1,138	0	1,391,302	795,114	0	2,186,416
Low Emission Vehicle Provision - Match (grant)	D	45,000	0	0	0	0	45,000	0	0	0	45,000	0	0	0	45,000
Pavement Channels	D	50,000	0	0	0	0	50,000	0	0	0	0	50,000	0	0	50,000
Environmental Services															
Waste & Recycling - vehicles and electric vehicle	G	10,213,313	426,000	0	0	0	10,639,313	7,469,372	1,703,621	9,172,993	10,639,314	0	0	0	10,639,314
Waste Contract - Garden Waste Bins / Food C	G	212,979	0	0	0	0	212,979	0	0	0	9,173	53,806	0	150,000	212,979
Waste Depot to FBC	G	499,000	0	0	0	0	499,000	20,942	3,000	23,942	0	0	499,000	0	499,000
HWRC - Investment Programme	G	154,236	0	0	0	0	154,236	28,672	9,573	38,245	154,236	0	0	0	154,236
HWRC - Lower Yard	G	16,446	1,850,000	0	0	0	1,866,446	4,928	0	4,928	0	0	0	1,866,446	1,866,446

MONITORING OF 2025/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME								APPENDIX 1							
CAPITAL PROGRAMME	RAG rating	APPROVED BUDGET						MONITORING TO 30 November 2025			APPROVED FUNDING				
		2025/26 Profiled Spend £	2026/27 Profiled Spend £	2027/28 Profiled Spend £	2028/29 Profiled Spend £	2029/30 Profiled Spend £	TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET £	Actual Spend £	Orders £	TOTAL COSTS £	Borrowing £	Grants & Contributions £	Reserves & Revenue £	Capital Receipts £	TOTAL APPROVED FUNDING £
Open Space, Natural Environment & Leisure															
Leisure Asset Management Plan	G	1,195,990	0	0	0	0	1,195,990	111,595	92,509	204,104	417,563	123,335	655,091	0	1,195,989
Scotch Horn Leisure Centre	A	900,000	0	0	0	0	900,000	217,695	683,727	901,422	0	0	690,000	210,000	900,000
Seafront Investments - (Lighting and Shelters)	G	201,474	0	0	0	0	201,474	32,331	900	33,231	158,713	0	42,761	0	201,474
Seafront Office	G	45,797	0	0	0	0	45,797	29,556	1,390	30,947	45,797	0	0	0	45,797
Clevedon Marine Lake	G	32,812	0	0	0	0	32,812	0	0	0	32,812	0	0	0	32,812
Weston Marine Lake - Dredging	G	6,234	0	0	0	0	6,234	0	760	760	6,234	0	0	0	6,234
Portishead Lakegrounds	G	29,596	0	0	0	0	29,596	0	5,536	5,536	29,596	0	0	0	29,596
England Coast Paths	G	74,400	0	0	0	0	74,400	0	0	0	0	74,400	0	0	74,400
Play Areas - replacement and upgrade program	G	14,783	100,000	0	0	0	114,783	18,937	0	18,937	103,786	0	10,997	0	114,783
Purchase of Land to support biodiversity net gain	G	170,119	0	0	0	0	170,119	45,045	0	45,045	170,119	0	0	0	170,119
SuperPond	G	116,308	0	0	0	0	116,308	15,519	5,900	21,419	116,308	0	0	0	116,308
Sea Defences	G	1,003,264	500,000	0	0	0	1,503,264	18,419	101,253	119,672	1,503,264	0	0	0	1,503,264
Natural Flood Management at Various Coombe	D	120,000	40,000	0	0	0	160,000	0	0	0	160,000	0	0	0	160,000
Public Rights of Way Programme	G	67,075	0	0	0	0	67,075	6,937	19,256	26,193	67,075	0	0	0	67,075
Trendlewood Park	D	24,920	0	0	0	0	24,920	0	0	0	0	24,920	0	0	24,920
ENVIRONMENT, ASSETS & TRANSPORT SERVICES - COMPLETED SCHEMES															
Play Areas - Local Match Funding - Skate Park	C	3,486	0	0	0	0	3,486	0	0	0	3,486	0	0	0	3,486
Weston to Clevedon Cycleway (Tutshill Sluice)	C	25,947	0	0	0	0	25,947	0	0	0	25,947	1	0	0	25,947
CLOSED - Heritage Action Zone	C	0	0	0	0	0	0	-799	-5,990	-6,788	0	0	0	0	0
Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA)	C	459,606	0	0	0	0	459,606	0	0	0	0	459,606	0	0	459,606
Hutton Moor Sport hall roof, wetside AHU & lift	C	2,606,101	0	0	0	0	2,606,101	2,242,408	450,628	2,693,036	0	2,073,770	0	532,332	2,606,101
Backwell AHU	C	25,461	0	0	0	0	25,461	24,461	0	24,461	0	0	0	25,461	25,461
CAMP Townshend Road Window Replacement	C	13,192	0	0	0	0	13,192	13,296	0	13,296	13,192	0	0	0	13,192
South Road Retaining Wall	C	53,000	0	0	0	0	53,000	-27,053	54,447	27,395	0	53,000	0	0	53,000
		131,683,188	183,448,044	49,140,225	3,787,525	155,129	368,214,111	45,757,508	149,979,476	195,736,984	91,203,917	251,662,538	13,412,292	11,935,364	368,214,111
HEALTHY & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES															
Joint place-making initiatives - Birnbeck Pier St	A	543,184	0	0	0	0	543,184	526,324	0	526,324	514,801	28,383	0		543,184
Birnbeck Pier Structure - Construction Phase	G	4,953,430	14,852,870	3,172,440	0	0	22,978,740	2,494	716,855	719,349	0	21,478,740	1,500,000		22,978,740
Birnbeck Pier Sth Toll Hse & Shell Shop	G	111,496	0	0	0	0	111,496	0	0	0	0	111,496	0		111,496
Levelling Up Round 2 - Tropicana, Birnbeck, M	A	32,978	0	0	0	0	32,978	397,735	35,151	432,886	0	32,978	0		32,978
LUF - Tropicana	R	9,875,656	0	0	0	0	9,875,656	332,707	643,667	976,374	0	7,443,335	0	2,432,321	9,875,656
LUF - Birnbeck (Landside)	A	1,758,870	0	0	0	0	1,758,870	11,161	1,946,676	1,957,838	0	1,758,870	0		1,758,870
LUF - Marine Lake	A	1,520,841	0	0	0	0	1,520,841	55,787	811,842	867,629	0	1,520,841	0		1,520,841
LUF - High Street	A	1,362,156	0	0	0	0	1,362,156	347,722	170,624	518,345	0	1,362,156	0		1,362,156
LUF - Grove Park	A	683,198	0	0	0	0	683,198	93,461	425,151	518,612	0	683,198	0		683,198
LUF - Wayfinding	A	387,640	0	0	0	0	387,640	218,949	47,004	265,953	0	387,640	0		387,640
CDF - Tropicana	G	1,000,000	1,013,661	0	0	0	2,013,661	9,895	0	9,895	0	2,013,661	0	0	2,013,661
Development Strategy	D	0	1,000,000	0	0	0	1,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,000,000	1,000,000
CCTV Control Room Move	G	17,797	0	0	0	0	17,797	9,659	0	9,659	0	0	17,797	0	17,797
REPF - Grants to Rural Business	G	73,000	0	0	0	0	73,000	4,080	0	4,080	0	73,000	0	0	73,000
REPF - Grants to Rural Communities	D	59,766	0	0	0	0	59,766	12,618	0	12,618	0	59,766	0	0	59,766
UKSPF - Support to Local Businesses	G	155,000	0	0	0	0	155,000	76,239	0	76,239	0	152,022	2,978	0	155,000
The Foodworks SW (incl S106)	G	38,272	0	0	0	0	38,272	25,920	2,946	28,866	0	0	38,272	0	38,272
Land at Parklands Village	A	378,854	0	0	0	0	378,854	0	0	0	0	373,181	5,673	0	378,854
Brownfield Release Sites - Walliscote Place	G	1,075,000	0	0	0	0	1,075,000	4,375	-4,892	-517	0	1,075,000	0	0	1,075,000
Dolphin Square - Brownfield Release	D	1,703,551	0	0	0	0	1,703,551	0	0	0	0	1,703,551	0	0	1,703,551
		25,730,689	16,866,531	3,172,440	0	0	45,769,660	2,129,125	4,795,025	6,924,149	514,801	40,257,818	1,564,720	3,432,321	45,769,660

ANALYSIS OF CHANGES TO THE 2025/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME					APPENDIX 2	
CHANGES MADE TO THE CAPITAL BUDGETS DURING 2025/26	2025/26 Capital Programme Budget £000	2026/27 Capital Prog Budget £000	2027/28 Capital Prog Budget £000	2028/29 Capital Prog Budget £000	2029/30 Capital Prog Budget £000	Total Capital Prog Budget £000
APPROVED CAPITAL BUDGETS, FEBRUARY 2025	195,270	92,533	11,266	828	0	299,897
Adjustments made in Feb & March 2025	156	851	3,000	0	0	4,007
	195,426	93,384	14,266	828	0	303,904
Planned Additions to the Programme - Cabinet Feb 2025	19,969	3,201	201	0	0	23,371
Slippage of approved budgets from 2024/25	72,600	0	0	0	0	72,600
TOTAL ORIGINAL CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR 2025/26	287,995	96,585	14,467	828	0	399,875
AMENDMENTS TO THE PROGRAMME IN-YEAR;						
Months 1-3 - April to June 2025						
Addition - Food Works Innovation Centre - S106 Funded (HSC110)	20	0	0	0	0	20
Addition - Integrated Transport Schemes - Grant Allocation 25/26 (EAT103)	980	0	0	0	0	980
Addition - Banwell Bypass - Council 01/04/2025	9,730	0	0	0	0	9,730
Addition - Banwell Bypass - Council 01/04/2025	4,789	0	0	0	0	4,789
Addition - Car Parking Tap & Pay machines (EAT86)	11	0	0	0	0	11
Addition - Highways Client Team Gully Emptier and Tipper (EAT 2)	269	0	0	0	0	269
Addition - REPF (HSC25)	133	0	0	0	0	133
Addition - Rebase of grant funding - Schools Condition (CY158)	297	0	0	0	0	297
Addition - St Martins School Refurbishment (CY005)	145	0	0	0	0	145
Addition - Post 16 education placements (CY006)	123	0	0	0	0	123
Addition - Hans Price Academy Resource Base (Executive Feb 2025)	1,500	0	0	0	0	1,500
Addition - SEND Gordano (Cabinet Apr)	1,627	0	0	0	0	1,627
Addition - MetroWest WECA CRSTS contribution	27,200	0	0	0	0	27,200
Addition - Swimming Pool Support Fund Strode Leisure Centre (EAT136)	75	0	0	0	0	75
Addition - Resettlement increase from S106	6	0	0	0	0	6
Addition - SEND Hans Price	57	0	0	0	0	57
Rephasing - ICT Information Management Programme	(210)	180	30	0	0	0
Rephasing - Safe Routes to School	(177)	177	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Land for Yatton Secondary School	(2,000)	2,000	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Ravenswood Demountable Building	(150)	150	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Hans Price Academy Resource Base	(665)	665	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - VLC Milton	(571)	571	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - VLC Replacement Weston	(1,000)	1,000	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Breach Classes	(1,525)	0	0	1,525	0	0
Realignment - Warm Homes Local Grant	(1,200)	(1,625)	(1,625)	0	0	(4,450)
Savings - SEND Schemes release of grant funding NET Saving (CY016)	(57)	0	0	0	0	(57)
Month 4 - July 2025						
Addition - Birnbeck Landside Toll House/Schell Shop (HSC46)	111	0	0	0	0	111
Addition - Birnbeck Pier Structure (July Council)	9,050	0	0	0	0	9,050
Addition - Birnbeck Pier Structure (July Council)	1,500	0	0	0	0	1,500
Rephasing - Banwell Bypass (EAT100)	(23,979)	18,846	5,134	0	0	0
Rephasing - A38/MRN - Construction Package A - NSC	(15,243)	10,749	4,321	173	0	0
Rephasing - A38/MRN - Construction Package A - SCC	(10,647)	10,647	0	0	0	0
Realignment - A38/MRN	(773)	0	0	0	0	(773)
Month 5 - August 2025						
Addition - Waste Depot to FBC (EAT141)	499	0	0	0	0	499
Addition - DRT vehicles (EAT125)	400	0	0	0	0	400
Addition - Play Area S106 funded spend	11	0	0	0	0	11
Addition - Ravenswood School Breach (CY058)	315	0	0	0	0	315
Addition - NSSR (EAT140)	127	0	0	0	0	127
Addition - YMCA capital contribution (EAT142)	60	0	0	0	0	60
Addition - Birnbeck (Council Sept 25)	313	0	0	0	0	313
Addition - ICT Transformation	0	300	1,000	0	0	1,300
Rephasing - MW Funding To Agreement with NR	(33,209)	625	30,065	2,519	0	0
Rephasing - Asset Related Activity	(2,000)	2,000	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - MW Funding From Agreement with NR	9,857	(9,857)	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - MW Funding From Agreement with NR	(7,599)	6,173	1,004	267	155	(0)

ANALYSIS OF CHANGES TO THE 2025/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME						APPENDIX 2
CHANGES MADE TO THE CAPITAL BUDGETS DURING 2025/26	2025/26 Capital Programme Budget £000	2026/27 Capital Prog Budget £000	2027/28 Capital Prog Budget £000	2028/29 Capital Prog Budget £000	2029/30 Capital Prog Budget £000	Total Capital Prog Budget £000
Month 6 - September 2025						
Addition - Active Travel Fund (EAT170)	307	0	0	0	0	307
Addition - Pavement Channels Grant Funding (EAT194)	50	0	0	0	0	50
Addition - Beach Rake (EAT191)	14	0	0	0	0	14
Addition - Sovereign Centre Capital Programme of Works (CSD073)	245	0	0	0	0	245
Addition - Highways Maintenance Allocation 2026/27	0	4,999	0	0	0	4,999
Addition - Integrated Transport Block 2026/27	0	1,091	0	0	0	1,091
Rephasing - BSIP to align with PAR	(17,526)	17,526	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Highways quarterly review (EAT200)	(813)	813	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Yatton Secondary	(681)	681	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Clevedon Secondary	(3,500)	3,500	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Banwell Primary	(240)	240	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - MetroWest Phase 1 Construction	(33,742)	33,742	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Birnbeck Pier Construction & Delivery	(16,025)	12,853	3,172	0	0	0
Rephasing - Waste - Lower Yard	(1,850)	1,850	0	0	0	0
Realignment - Funding realignment CDF Tropicana grant	0	14	0	0	0	14
Realignment - Funding realignment Winterstoke Road Bridge	21	0	0	0	0	21
Realignment - Funding realignment Highways KDH103	0	0	0	0	0	0
Month 7 - October 2025						
Addition - Waste Bins	150	0	0	0	0	150
Addition - Highways	150	0	0	0	0	150
Addition - Hutton Moor (EAT228)	50	0	0	0	0	50
Addition - England Coast Path (EAT231)	74	0	0	0	0	74
Addition - VLC Milton (CY098)	30	0	0	0	0	30
Month 8 - November 2025						
Addition - UKSPF - RCCO for Green Business Grants (DN2)	3	0	0	0	0	3
Virement - Hutton Moor (EAT228)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virement - Strode Road Leisure Centre Roof - Phase 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Asset Related Activity	370	(370)	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - SEND / Safety Valve – Gordano School	(1,500)	1,500	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - SEND / Safety Valve - Hans Price Academy	(1,000)	1,000	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Statutory Compliance	(300)	300	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - VLC Weston NEW	(250)	250	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Haywood Village Primary 2 – Green agenda	(400)	400	0	0	0	0
Rephasing - Development Programme	(1,000)	1,000	0	0	0	0
Savings - Baytree SEN Clevedon (CSD118)	(332)	0	0	0	0	(332)
Realignment - Churchill Land Release Fund	(350)	0	0	0	0	(350)
SUB TOTAL - CHANGES IN 2025/26	(109,844)	123,988	43,100	4,484	155	61,884
REVISED 2025/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME	178,151	220,573	57,568	5,312	155	461,759

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF CHANGES TO THE 2025/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME						
CHANGES MADE TO THE CAPITAL BUDGETS DURING 2025/26	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000	TOTAL £000
Original approved capital expenditure budget 2024/25(@P9);	195,270	92,533	11,266	828	0	299,897
Movements approved during 2024/25 in quarter 4 (Jan-March)	156	851	3,000	0	0	4,007
Planned Additions to the capital Programme - Executive, Feb 2025	19,969	3,201	201	0	0	23,371
Slippage of approved budgets from 2024/25 (Out-turn position)	72,600	0	0	0	0	72,600
Additions < £1m - per scheme	5,026	6,390	1,000	0	0	12,416
Additions > £1m - per scheme - Banwell Bypass (Council April 25)	14,518	0	0	0	0	14,518
Additions > £1m - per scheme - Hans Price Academy RB (Cabinet Feb 25)	1,500	0	0	0	0	1,500
Additions > £1m - per scheme - SEND Gordano (Cabinet April 25)	1,627	0	0	0	0	1,627
Additions > £1m - per scheme - MetroWest CRSTS Funding (Council July 25)	27,200	0	0	0	0	27,200
Additions > £1m - per scheme - Birnbeck Pier Structure	10,550	0	0	0	0	10,550
Rephasing of the spend profile	(167,574)	119,210	43,725	4,484	155	0
Realignments / reductions	(2,691)	(1,611)	(1,625)	0	0	(5,927)
	178,151	220,573	57,568	5,312	155	461,759

ADDITIONS TO THE 2026/27 CAPITAL PROGRAMME					APPENDIX 3	
ADDITIONS TO THE 2026/27 CAPITAL PROGRAMME - EARMARKED FUNDING	2025/26 Capital Budget £000	2026/27 Capital Budget £000	2027/28 Capital Budget £000	2028/29 Capital Budget £000	2029/30 Capital Budget £000	Total Capital Budget £000
Approved Capital Budgets, February 2026						
Highways Maintenance Grant - Base Allocation	0	428	6,051	6,727	8,017	21,223
Highways Maintenance Grant - Incentive Allocation	0	1,974	2,578	2,592	2,636	9,780
Highways Local Transport Grant	0	0	2,405	3,295	4,186	9,886
Local Authority Bus Grant	0	1,306	1,332	1,359	1,385	5,382
Active Travel Capability Fund	0	272	272	272	272	1,087
Sub Total - Confirmed Grant Allocations	0	3,980	12,638	14,244	16,495	47,357
Estimated Capital Funding Allocations						
Disabled Facilities Grant	0	2,930	0	0	0	2,930
Local Authority Housing Fund	0	620	0	0	0	620
Sub Total - Estimated Grant Allocations	0	3,550	0	0	0	3,550
ADDITIONS - EARMARKED FUNDING	0	7,529	12,638	14,244	16,495	50,907

FUNDING SOURCES	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000	Total £000
Grants from;						
- Department for Transport (DFT)	0	3,980	12,638	14,244	16,495	47,357
- Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)	0	3,550	0	0	0	3,550
TOTAL - EARMARKED FUNDING	0	7,529	12,638	14,244	16,495	50,907

ADDITIONS TO THE 2026/27 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

APPENDIX 4

ADDITIONS TO THE 2025/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME - COUNCIL FUNDING	2025/26 Capital Budget £000	2026/27 Capital Budget £000	2027/28 Capital Budget £000	2028/29 Capital Budget £000	2029/30 Capital Budget £000	Total Capital Budget £000
Approved Capital Budgets, February 2026 In principle approval - Carlton Street Car Park	0	2,750	0	0	0	2,750
ADDITIONS - COUNCIL FUNDING	0	2,750	0	0	0	2,750

FUNDING SOURCES	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000	TOTAL £000
External Borrowing	0	2,750	0	0	0	2,750
TOTAL - COUNCIL FUNDING	0	2,750	0	0	0	2,750

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2026/27 - INCLUDING NEW FUNDING & INVESTMENT PLANS
APPENDIX 5

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME FROM 2026/27	RAG rating	APPROVED BUDGET							APPROVED FUNDING				
		2025/26 Profiled Spend	2026/27 Profiled Spend	2027/28 Profiled Spend	2028/29 Profiled Spend	2029/30 Profiled Spend	2030/31 Profiled Spend	TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET	Borrowing	Grants & Contributions	Reserves & Revenue	Capital Receipts	TOTAL APPROVED FUNDING
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Adult Social Services & Housing		7,727,170	5,424,717	1,875,000	0	0	0	15,026,886	421,498	9,603,050	502,338	4,500,000	15,026,886
Childrens Services		10,098,109	15,007,469	2,250,000	1,524,559	0	0	28,880,137	2,953,453	23,059,176	2,867,507	0	28,880,136
Corporate Services		2,911,469	3,376,000	1,130,000	0	0	0	7,417,469	3,682,204	242,815	2,053,843	1,438,607	7,417,469
Environment, Assets & Transport		131,683,188	190,177,702	61,778,134	18,031,686	16,533,851	116,690	418,321,251	93,953,918	299,019,677	13,412,292	11,935,364	418,321,251
Healthy & Sustainable Communities		25,730,689	16,866,531	3,172,440	0	0	0	45,769,660	514,801	40,257,818	1,564,720	3,432,321	45,769,660
TOTAL SPENDING		178,150,625	230,852,418	70,205,574	19,556,245	16,533,851	116,690	515,415,403	101,525,874	372,182,536	20,400,700	21,306,292	515,415,402

ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING													
Adult social care accommodation shift	D	187,024	0	0	0	0	0	187,024	0	182,461	4,563	0	187,024
Aids & Adaptations Equipment	G	400,000	0	0	0	0	0	400,000	0	400,000	0	0	400,000
Housing & Technology Fund	G	5,813	0	0	0	0	0	5,813	0	5,813	0	0	5,813
Social Care Projects	G	358,674	0	0	0	0	0	358,674	0	159,354	199,320	0	358,674
Disabled Facilities Grants	G	2,530,217	2,930,217	0	0	0	0	5,460,434	0	5,460,434	0	0	5,460,434
Other Private Sector Renewal	G	18,029	0	0	0	0	0	18,029	0	18,029	0	0	18,029
Social Housing Grants	G	693,498	0	0	0	0	0	693,498	421,498	75,000	197,000	0	693,498
Social Housing Grant - S106	G	60,000	0	0	0	0	0	60,000	0	0	60,000	0	60,000
Repurchase Leasehold Properties	G	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	0	0	0	4,500,000	0	0	0	4,500,000	4,500,000
First Time Buyer Loan Scheme	G	35,000	0	0	0	0	0	35,000	0	0	35,000	0	35,000
Technology Enabled Care	D	750,000	0	0	0	0	0	750,000	0	750,000	0	0	750,000
Insulation of park homes	G	81,731	0	0	0	0	0	81,731	0	81,731	0	0	81,731
Warm Homes Local Grant	D	300,000	375,000	375,000	0	0	0	1,049,999	0	1,049,999	0	0	1,049,999
ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES & HOUSING - Completed Schemes													
Local Authority Housing Fund	C	807,184	619,500	0	0	0	0	1,426,684	0	1,420,229	6,455	0	1,426,684
		7,727,170	5,424,717	1,875,000	0	0	0	15,026,886	421,498	9,603,050	502,338	4,500,000	15,026,886
CORPORATE SERVICES													
ICT - Council Priorities - (Carelink)	G	0	1,000,000	1,000,000	0	0	0	2,000,000	700,000	0	0	1,300,000	2,000,000
Phones - Replacement Programme (Android)	G	211,935	0	0	0	0	0	211,935	211,935	0	0	0	211,935
Devices - Replacement Programme	G	473,828	200,000	0	0	0	0	673,828	673,828	0	0	0	673,828
ICT - Replacement Programme	G	6,812	0	0	0	0	0	6,812	6,812	0	0	0	6,812
ICT - Devices - Laptops (break fix & new starter	G	176,000	116,000	0	0	0	0	292,000	292,000	0	0	0	292,000
ICT - Networks & Infrastructure	G	189,720	0	0	0	0	0	189,720	51,113	0	0	138,607	189,720
ICT - Security Tools	G	162,231	100,000	100,000	0	0	0	362,231	362,231	0	0	0	362,231
ICT - Windows 11 upgrade project	R	52,000	0	0	0	0	0	52,000	52,000	0	0	0	52,000
ICT - Jontec Carelink system	G	2,807	0	0	0	0	0	2,807	2,807	0	0	0	2,807
ICT - COntroCC - Provider Portal module	G	112,657	0	0	0	0	0	112,657	112,657	0	0	0	112,657
ICT - Customer Services	G	79,699	0	0	0	0	0	79,699	79,699	0	0	0	79,699
ICT - Purchase of e-store & Digital documentatio	D	80,000	0	0	0	0	0	80,000	0	0	80,000	0	80,000
ICT - GIS / Mapping system projects	D	180,000	0	0	0	0	0	180,000	180,000	0	0	0	180,000
ICT - Highways Systems (Confirm, Scanworks,)	G	117,699	0	0	0	0	0	117,699	117,699	0	0	0	117,699
ICT - Information Programme	G	204,964	180,000	30,000	0	0	0	414,964	414,964	0	0	0	414,964
ICT - Agresso Development	G	150,000	150,000	0	0	0	0	300,000	300,000	0	0	0	300,000
Asset Related Activity - to be approved by Execd	D	0	1,630,000	0	0	0	0	1,630,000	0	0	1,630,000	0	1,630,000
Flax Bourton Mortuary	G	12,977	0	0	0	0	0	12,977	0	0	12,977	0	12,977
Sovereign Centre - Capital Programme	G	245,000	0	0	0	0	0	245,000	0	0	245,000	0	245,000
Accommodation Strategy	G	169,514	0	0	0	0	0	169,514	124,459	0	45,055	0	169,514
Eco Bus (library outreach vehicle (mobile replac	G	283,626	0	0	0	0	0	283,626	0	242,815	40,811	0	283,626
		2,911,469	3,376,000	1,130,000	0	0	0	7,417,469	3,682,204	242,815	2,053,843	1,438,607	7,417,469

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME FROM 2026/27	RAG rating	APPROVED BUDGET							APPROVED FUNDING				
		2025/26 Profiled Spend £	2026/27 Profiled Spend £	2027/28 Profiled Spend £	2028/29 Profiled Spend £	2029/30 Profiled Spend £	2030/31 Profiled Spend £	TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET £	Borrowing £	Grants & Contributions £	Reserves & Revenue £	Capital Receipts £	TOTAL APPROVED FUNDING £
CHILDRENS SERVICES													
Family Hubs - Locking Castle Children's Centre	G	191,305	0	0	0	0	0	191,305	0	0	191,305	0	191,305
Churchill Social Emotional & Mental Health - relock	G	434,176	0	0	0	0	0	434,176	350,000	84,176	0	0	434,176
Ravenswood replacement de-mountable building	G	0	150,000	0	0	0	0	150,000	150,000	0	0	0	150,000
SEND / Safety Valve - Hans Price Academy - RB	G	254,063	1,665,193	0	0	0	0	1,919,255	0	1,861,695	57,560	0	1,919,255
SEND / Safety Valve - VLC Milton	A	1,057,828	571,081	0	0	0	0	1,628,909	0	1,628,909	0	0	1,628,909
SEND / Safety Valve - St Martins	R	145,200	0	0	0	0	0	145,200	0	145,200	0	0	145,200
SEND / SV - VLC Oldmixon Replacement Site	A	498,475	1,750,000	0	0	0	0	2,248,475	1,018,889	1,229,586	0	0	2,248,475
SEND / Safety Valve - Nailsea School - RB	R	69,594	0	0	0	0	0	69,594	0	69,594	0	0	69,594
SEND / Safety Valve - Gordano School - RB	G	217,749	1,500,000	0	0	0	0	1,717,749	0	1,717,749	0	0	1,717,749
SEND / Safety Valve - Ravenswood Breach 202	G	314,500	0	0	0	0	0	314,500	0	314,500	0	0	314,500
Statutory Compliance	G	204,857	300,000	0	0	0	0	504,857	0	504,857	0	0	504,857
Breach Classes - additional primary school place	D	0	2,250,000	2,250,000	1,524,559	0	0	6,024,559	0	6,024,559	0	0	6,024,559
Monitoring of Party Wall - Banwell Primary School	G	500,000	0	0	0	0	0	500,000	500,000	0	0	0	500,000
Haywood Village Primary - Green Agenda Plan	G	100,000	400,000	0	0	0	0	500,000	500,000	0	0	0	500,000
Clevedon Secondary School	D	342,735	3,500,000	0	0	0	0	3,842,735	0	3,842,735	0	0	3,842,735
Central Secondary - additional secondary school	D	0	680,915	0	0	0	0	680,915	0	557,927	122,988	0	680,915
Land for Yatton Secondary	G	0	2,000,000	0	0	0	0	2,000,000	0	2,000,000	0	0	2,000,000
Childcare expansion - Early Years	D	350,149	0	0	0	0	0	350,149	0	350,149	0	0	350,149
Childrens Centre - Rolling Maintenance Program	D	20,328	0	0	0	0	0	20,328	20,328	0	0	0	20,328
Childrens Sufficiency - 1	D	1,117,000	0	0	0	0	0	1,117,000	0	0	1,117,000	0	1,117,000
Childrens Sufficiency - 2	D	883,000	0	0	0	0	0	883,000	0	0	883,000	0	883,000
CHILDRENS SERVICES - Completed Schemes													0
CLOSO - SEND / Safety Valve - Crockerne Priory	C	6,102	0	0	0	0	0	6,102	0	6,102	0	0	6,102
Banwell Primary School	C	0	240,280	0	0	0	0	240,280	0	240,280	0	0	240,280
Kewstoke - Roof and other school updates	C	77,342	0	0	0	0	0	77,342	77,342	0	0	0	77,342
SEND / Safety Valve - EY/Ashcombe Childrens	C	221,933	0	0	0	0	0	221,933	0	221,933	0	0	221,933
SEND / Safety Valve - Locking Primary - RB	C	10,623	0	0	0	0	0	10,623	0	10,623	0	0	10,623
SEND / Safety Valve - Meadvale - NG	C	20,488	0	0	0	0	0	20,488	0	20,488	0	0	20,488
SEND / Safety Valve - St Andrews Primary NG	C	12,490	0	0	0	0	0	12,490	0	12,490	0	0	12,490
SEND / Safety Valve - Gordano NG	C	17,137	0	0	0	0	0	17,137	0	17,137	0	0	17,137
SEND / Safety Valve - Portishead Primary NG	C	12,987	0	0	0	0	0	12,987	0	2,010	10,977	0	12,987
SEND / Safety Valve - Hannah Moore - RB	C	924,036	0	0	0	0	0	924,036	0	924,036	0	0	924,036
SEND / Safety Valve -Priory Worle Secondary -	C	566,062	0	0	0	0	0	566,062	94,885	471,177	0	0	566,062
SEND / Safety Valve - Christchurch - NG	C	724,598	0	0	0	0	0	724,598	0	724,598	0	0	724,598
Baytree (The Campus) - Roof/Boiler	C	242,009	0	0	0	0	0	242,009	242,009	0	0	0	242,009
Baytree Special School - Brookfield Walk Clevedon	C	76,666	0	0	0	0	0	76,666	0	76,666	0	0	76,666
S106 Early Years Childcare Places	C	468,725	0	0	0	0	0	468,725	0	0	468,725	0	468,725
Winterstoke Hundred Academy Expansion (HIF)	C	15,952	0	0	0	0	0	15,952	0	0	15,952	0	15,952
		10,098,109	15,007,469	2,250,000	1,524,559	0	0	28,880,137	2,953,453	23,059,176	2,867,507	0	28,880,136

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME FROM 2026/27	RAG rating	APPROVED BUDGET							APPROVED FUNDING				
		2025/26 Profiled Spend £	2026/27 Profiled Spend £	2027/28 Profiled Spend £	2028/29 Profiled Spend £	2029/30 Profiled Spend £	2030/31 Profiled Spend £	TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET £	Borrowing £	Grants & Contributions £	Reserves & Revenue £	Capital Receipts £	TOTAL APPROVED FUNDING £
ENVIRONMENT, ASSETS & TRANSPORT													
Major Projects													
Winterstoke Rd Bridge	A	14,307,398	11,831,032	1,917,318	0	0	0	28,055,748	0	28,034,895	20,853	0	28,055,748
South Bristol Link Part 1 Claims	G	325,290	0	0	0	0	0	325,290	325,290	0	0	0	325,290
Metro West	A	17,977,064	89,657,141	36,543,736	3,614,745	38,439	116,690	147,947,815	62,530,000	81,061,094	990,000	3,366,721	147,947,815
Metro West Phase 2 EDF	A	1,546,016	0	0	0	0	0	1,546,016	1,546,016	0	0	0	1,546,016
North South Link	G	201,580	0	0	0	0	0	201,580	0	0	0	201,580	201,580
Utilities at Parklands Village	A	117,000	0	0	0	0	0	117,000	0	0	117,000	0	117,000
HIF - Banwell Bypass	A	39,131,179	30,520,505	5,358,666	0	0	0	75,010,350	7,826,804	58,527,779	5,088,570	3,567,197	75,010,350
Major Road Network (A38) to FBC	G	2,153,944	21,396,523	4,320,505	172,780	0	0	28,043,752	0	26,220,133	1,823,619	0	28,043,752
Assets & Property													0
Corporate Asset Management Plan	G	1,188,697	1,500,000	1,000,000	0	0	0	3,688,697	2,338,406	0	1,350,291	0	3,688,697
CAMP - Sandford Road Depot	G	81,256	0	0	0	0	0	81,256	81,256	0	0	0	81,256
CAMP - Clevedon Community Centre Ph3	G	23,750	0	0	0	0	0	23,750	22,404	0	1,346	0	23,750
CAMP - TH Air Conditioning	G	24,545	0	0	0	0	0	24,545	24,545	0	0	0	24,545
CAMP - Castlewood UPS	G	82,500	0	0	0	0	0	82,500	82,500	0	0	0	82,500
CAMP - Access Control System	G	462,000	0	0	0	0	0	462,000	462,000	0	0	0	462,000
CAMP - Lathe & Plaster Registrars	G	32,361	0	0	0	0	0	32,361	32,361	0	0	0	32,361
CAMP - Castlewood Roof Repairs	G	13,000	0	0	0	0	0	13,000	13,000	0	0	0	13,000
Locking Road CP Storage	G	59,288	0	0	0	0	0	59,288	29,688	0	29,600	0	59,288
Other Asset Management works	D	500,000	0	0	0	0	0	500,000	500,000	0	0	0	500,000
Roofing solar pilot - Invest to Save	D	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	100,000	100,000	0	0	0	100,000
Town Hall Fire Risk Assessments	G	238,466	0	0	0	0	0	238,466	0	0	238,466	0	238,466
ENVIRONMENT, ASSETS & TRANSPORT													
Highways													
Integrated Transport Schemes	G	1,540,691	1,616,112	2,676,641	3,566,641	4,457,641	0	13,857,726	0	13,809,122	48,604	0	13,857,726
Maintenance Schemes - funding to be allocated	G	8,403,451	5,986,101	6,051,000	6,727,000	8,017,000	0	35,184,552	0	33,704,530	0	1,480,022	35,184,552
Maintenance Schemes Incentive - funding to be allocated		0	1,974,000	2,578,000	2,592,000	2,636,000	0	9,780,000	0	9,780,000	0	0	9,780,000
Traffic Signals Obsolescence Grant	G	534,870	0	0	0	0	0	534,870	0	534,870	0	0	534,870
NSC Capital Unclassified Roads	G	3,491,588	0	0	0	0	0	3,491,588	0	2,955,982	0	535,606	3,491,588
Safe Routes to School	D	0	176,794	0	0	0	0	176,794	0	0	176,794	0	176,794
Clevedon Seafront - Phase 2	G	259,881	0	0	0	0	0	259,881	67,699	192,182	0	0	259,881
Highways Contract - Vehicles and Plant	G	279,530	0	0	0	0	0	279,530	279,530	0	0	0	279,530
Parking Schemes	D	35,716	0	0	0	0	0	35,716	35,716	0	0	0	35,716
Investment in Car Parks	G	410,584	0	0	0	0	0	410,584	400,000	0	10,584	0	410,584
Car Parking Strategy	G	493,322	0	0	0	0	0	493,322	493,322	0	0	0	493,322
Carlton Street Car Park	D	0	2,750,000	0	0	0	0	2,750,000	2,750,000	0	0	0	2,750,000
Transport													
Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV)	G	231,590	0	0	0	0	0	231,590	21,284	210,306	0	0	231,590
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI)	G	0	851,000	0	0	0	0	851,000	0	851,000	0	0	851,000
Metrobus Contingency/ AVTM	G	119,548	170,935	0	0	0	0	290,483	290,483	0	0	0	290,483
Vivacity Traffic Counting Equipment	G	42,893	0	0	0	0	0	42,893	0	0	42,893	0	42,893
HTST Ravenswood School Parking	D	250,000	0	0	0	0	0	250,000	0	0	250,000	0	250,000
BSIP - Bus Priority Schemes	A	7,083,677	15,723,128	0	0	0	0	22,806,805	0	22,676,096	130,709	0	22,806,805
BSIP - Passenger Infrastructure	A	8,973,559	1,802,414	0	0	0	0	10,775,973	0	10,775,973	0	0	10,775,973
Local Authority Bus Grant		0	1,306,017	1,332,268	1,358,520	1,384,771	0	5,381,576	0	5,381,576	0	0	5,381,576
Purchase of DRT Vehicles	G	400,000	0	0	0	0	0	400,000	0	0	400,000	0	400,000
J21 Northbound Slip	A	2,186,416	0	0	0	0	0	2,186,416	0	1,391,302	795,114	0	2,186,416
Low Emission Vehicle Provision - Match (grant to be repaid)	D	45,000	0	0	0	0	0	45,000	45,000	0	0	0	45,000
Pavement Channels	D	50,000	0	0	0	0	0	50,000	0	50,000	0	0	50,000

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME FROM 2026/27	RAG rating	APPROVED BUDGET							APPROVED FUNDING				
		2025/26 Profiled Spend £	2026/27 Profiled Spend £	2027/28 Profiled Spend £	2028/29 Profiled Spend £	2029/30 Profiled Spend £	2030/31 Profiled Spend £	TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET £	Borrowing £	Grants & Contributions £	Reserves & Revenue £	Capital Receipts £	TOTAL APPROVED FUNDING £
ENVIRONMENT, ASSETS & TRANSPORT													
Environmental Services													
Waste & Recycling - vehicles and electric vehicle	G	10,213,313	426,000	0	0	0	0	10,639,313	10,639,313	0	0	0	10,639,313
Waste Contract - Garden Waste Bins / Food C	G	212,979	0	0	0	0	0	212,979	9,173	53,806	0	150,000	212,979
Waste Depot to FBC	G	499,000	0	0	0	0	0	499,000	0	0	499,000	0	499,000
HWRC - Investment Programme	G	154,236	0	0	0	0	0	154,236	154,236	0	0	0	154,236
HWRC - Lower Yard	G	16,446	1,850,000	0	0	0	0	1,866,446	0	0	0	1,866,446	1,866,446
Open Space, Natural Environment & Leisure													
Leisure Asset Management Plan	G	1,145,990	0	0	0	0	0	1,145,990	417,564	123,335	605,091	0	1,145,990
Scotch Horn Leisure Centre	A	900,000	0	0	0	0	0	900,000	0	0	690,000	210,000	900,000
Seafront Investments - (Lighting and Shelters)	G	201,474	0	0	0	0	0	201,474	158,713	0	42,761	0	201,474
Seafront Office	G	45,797	0	0	0	0	0	45,797	45,797	0	0	0	45,797
Clevedon Marine Lake	G	32,812	0	0	0	0	0	32,812	32,812	0	0	0	32,812
Weston Marine Lake - Dredging	G	6,234	0	0	0	0	0	6,234	6,234	0	0	0	6,234
Portishead Lakegrounds	G	29,596	0	0	0	0	0	29,596	29,596	0	0	0	29,596
England Coast Paths	G	74,400	0	0	0	0	0	74,400	0	74,400	0	0	74,400
Play Areas - replacement and upgrade program	G	14,783	100,000	0	0	0	0	114,783	103,786	0	10,997	0	114,783
Purchase of Land to support biodiversity net gai	G	170,119	0	0	0	0	0	170,119	170,119	0	0	0	170,119
Super Pond	G	116,308	0	0	0	0	0	116,308	116,308	0	0	0	116,308
Sea Defences	G	1,003,264	500,000	0	0	0	0	1,503,264	1,503,264	0	0	0	1,503,264
Nature Flood Management at Various Coombe	D	120,000	40,000	0	0	0	0	160,000	160,000	0	0	0	160,000
Public Rights of Way Programme	G	67,075	0	0	0	0	0	67,075	67,075	0	0	0	67,075
Trenglewood Park	D	24,920	0	0	0	0	0	24,920	0	24,920	0	0	24,920
ENVIRONMENT, ASSETS & TRANSPORT SERVICES - COMPLETED SCHEMES													
Play Areas - Local Match Funding - Skate Parks	C	3,486	0	0	0	0	0	3,486	3,486	0	0	0	3,486
Weston to Clevedon Cycleway (Tutshill Sluice)	C	25,947	0	0	0	0	0	25,947	25,947	0	0	0	25,947
Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA)	C	459,606	0	0	0	0	0	459,606	0	459,606	0	0	459,606
Hutton Moor Sport hall roof, wet side AHU & lift	C	2,656,101	0	0	0	0	0	2,656,101	0	2,073,770	50,000	532,331	2,656,101
Backwell AHU	C	25,461	0	0	0	0	0	25,461	0	0	0	25,461	25,461
South Road Retaining Wall	C	53,000	0	0	0	0	0	53,000	0	53,000	0	0	53,000
CAMP - Townshend Road Window Replacement	C	13,192	0	0	0	0	0	13,192	13,192	0	0	0	13,192
		131,683,188	190,177,702	61,778,134	18,031,686	16,533,851	116,690	418,321,251	93,953,918	299,019,677	13,412,292	11,935,364	418,321,251

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME FROM 2026/27	RAG rating	APPROVED BUDGET							APPROVED FUNDING				
		2025/26 Profiled Spend £	2026/27 Profiled Spend £	2027/28 Profiled Spend £	2028/29 Profiled Spend £	2029/30 Profiled Spend £	2030/31 Profiled Spend £	TOTAL APPROVED BUDGET £	Borrowing £	Grants & Contributions £	Reserves & Revenue £	Capital Receipts £	TOTAL APPROVED FUNDING £
HEALTHY & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES													
Joint place-making initiatives - Birnbeck Pier Str	A	543,184	0	0	0	0	0	543,184	514,801	28,383	0		543,184
Birnbeck Pier Structure - Construction Phase	G	4,953,430	14,852,870	3,172,440	0	0	0	22,978,740	0	21,478,740	1,500,000		22,978,740
Birnbeck Pier Sth Toll Hse & Shell Shop	G	111,496	0	0	0	0	0	111,496	0	111,496	0		111,496
Levelling Up Round 2 - Tropicana, Birnbeck, Ma	A	32,978	0	0	0	0	0	32,978	0	32,978	0		32,978
LUF - Tropicana	R	9,875,656	0	0	0	0	0	9,875,656	0	7,443,335	0	2,432,321	9,875,656
LUF - Birnbeck (Landside)	A	1,758,870	0	0	0	0	0	1,758,870	0	1,758,870	0		1,758,870
LUF - Marine Lake	A	1,520,841	0	0	0	0	0	1,520,841	0	1,520,841	0		1,520,841
LUF - High Street	A	1,362,156	0	0	0	0	0	1,362,156	0	1,362,156	0		1,362,156
LUF - Grove Park	A	683,198	0	0	0	0	0	683,198	0	683,198	0		683,198
LUF - Wayfinding	A	387,640	0	0	0	0	0	387,640	0	387,640	0		387,640
CDF - Tropicana	G	1,000,000	1,013,661	0	0	0	0	2,013,661	0	2,013,661	0	0	2,013,661
Development Strategy	D	0	1,000,000	0	0	0	0	1,000,000	0	0	0	1,000,000	1,000,000
CCTV Control Room Move	G	17,797	0	0	0	0	0	17,797	0	0	17,797	0	17,797
REPF - Grants to Rural Business	D	73,000	0	0	0	0	0	73,000	0	73,000	0	0	73,000
REPF - Grants to Rural Communities	D	59,766	0	0	0	0	0	59,766	0	59,766	0	0	59,766
UKSPF - Support to Local Businesses	G	155,000	0	0	0	0	0	155,000	0	152,022	2,978	0	155,000
The Foodworks SW (incl S106)	G	38,272	0	0	0	0	0	38,272	0	0	38,272	0	38,272
Land at Parklands Village	A	378,854	0	0	0	0	0	378,854	0	373,181	5,673	0	378,854
Brownfield Release Sites - Walliscote Place	G	1,075,000	0	0	0	0	0	1,075,000	0	1,075,000	0	0	1,075,000
Dolphin Square - Brownfield Release	D	1,703,551	0	0	0	0	0	1,703,551	0	1,703,551	0	0	1,703,551
		25,730,689	16,866,531	3,172,440	0	0	0	45,769,660	514,801	40,257,818	1,564,720	3,432,321	45,769,660

Asset Category	Net Book Value 31/03/2024 £000	Net Book Value 31/03/2025 £000	Notes
Current Assets			
- Assets held for Sale	0	0	Properties must meet relevant accounting criteria
Non Current Assets			
- Heritage Assets	288	288	Includes paintings, artefacts
- Intangible Assets	50	0	Includes software and licences, not physical assets
- Investment Properties	44,894	53,512	Not used to support operational activity or services (see below)
- Property, Plant & Equipment Assets;			
* Community Assets	4,621	4,585	Includes parks, play areas, open spaces, woodland
* Infrastructure Assets	155,006	155,008	Includes roads, structures, street lighting, street furniture
* Other Land & Buildings	175,712	180,176	Includes schools, housing, car parks, offices etc
* Surplus Assets, Not for Sale	42	376	
* Assets Under Construction	47,243	60,850	Includes prior year spend on major capital projects
* Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	12,609	13,421	
TOTAL ASSETS	440,465	468,216	

Further details for investment property assets

Investment Property	Net Book Value 31/03/2024 £'000	Net Book Value 31/03/2025 £'000	Financial Strategy	Notes
Sovereign Centre	1,891	2,830	revenue return	
North Worle District Centre	16,500	24,000	revenue return	
Land at Uplands Nailsea	1,340	1,328	capital appreciation	
Site at Weston Seafront	167	167	revenue return	Leased out
Site at Weston Seafront	187	300	revenue return	Leased out
Land at Weston Business Quarter	740	171	capital appreciation	
Land off Junction Road Weston	206	206	revenue return	
Land at Cheston Coombe	89	89	capital appreciation	
Land at Dowlais Farm	586	621	revenue return and capital appreciation	
Land at Eastermead Farm	704	358	capital appreciation	
Land at Grange Farm	1,205	1,100	capital appreciation	
Locking Head Cottage Farm	1,090	931	capital appreciation	
Locking Head Farm	16,365	16,133	capital appreciation	
Land adj Greenhill Farm	138	145	capital appreciation	
Land at Sunnyside Road	240	240	capital appreciation	
Land at Youngwood Lane	103	108	capital appreciation	
Land west of Ladymead Lane	60	60	capital appreciation	
Site in Banwell	-	850	revenue return and capital appreciation	
Site in Portishead - Horatio House (part)	-	629	revenue return	Incl Portishead Library
Land at Carlton Street (Head Lease)	1,534	1,611	revenue return	
Dolphin Square - Site of Former Offices	1,634	1,634	capital appreciation	
Roselawn Site	113	-	capital appreciation	
	44,894	53,512		

Glossary of Terms

BSIP - Bus Services Improvement Plan - Grant funding from DfT

Capital Planning Programme Board (CPPDB) - the internal board with the purpose to ensure quality, consistency of approach and co-ordination across the Capital Programme as part of the Council's Capital Strategy. To oversee the operational, risk and financial performance of capital projects which align to the organisation's intended outcomes and make recommendations to decision makers. To bring programme planning, monitoring and delivery in to one place with a wide range of stakeholders to consider effective investment proposals.

CIPFA - the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The institute is one of the leading professional accountancy bodies in the UK and the only one which specialises in the public sector. It is responsible for the education and training of professional accountants and for their regulation through the setting and monitoring of professional standards. Uniquely among the professional accountancy bodies in the UK, CIPFA has responsibility for setting accounting standards for a significant part of the economy, namely local government. CIPFA's members work, in public service bodies, in the national audit agencies and major accountancy firms.

Corporate Plan - the Council's vision, ambitions, and commitments for the period 2024 to 2028 and was developed through engagement with residents and stakeholders. Its accompanying action plan outlines how we will achieve those commitments and ambitions and ultimately contribute to the vision to be open, fair and green.

DfE - Department for Education - Ministerial department of the Government - responsible for child protection, child services, education, apprenticeships and wider skills in England.

DFG - Disabled Facilities Grant - funding to assist with home adaptations to enable a disabled person to continue to live in their own home.

DfT - Department for Transport - Ministerial department of the Government - responsible for the English transport network.

Earmarked - Sums set aside for major schemes, such as capital development or asset purchase, or to fund major reorganisations. Where expenditure is planned in future accounting periods, it is prudent to set aside resources in advance.

LUF - Levelling up Fund Grant funding from MHCLG, the Levelling up funding was introduced to bridge the gap between prosperous and disadvantaged regions, ensuring all communities have equal opportunities for improvement. The Levelling Up Fund is for local authorities – primarily to use for areas that need investment.

MHCLG – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Government department that sets policy on supporting local government, communities and neighbourhoods, regeneration, housing, planning building and the environment and fire.

MTFP- Medium Term Financial Plan - The Councils plan that supports the on-going provision of core services for the people of North Somerset, within the context of the ambitions and commitments for the area, as set out within the Corporate Plan although also provides a financial context in terms of mapping the likely costs and pressures that the council will face over the period and comparing these to the anticipated income and resource allocations providing early insight into future challenges or opportunities.

Prudential Code – a governance procedure for the setting and revising of prudential indicators. Its aim is to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of the council are affordable, prudent, and sustainable and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good practice.

PSDS – Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme provides grants for public sector bodies to fund heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures

PV – Photovoltaics (PV) is the conversion of light into electricity using semiconducting materials that exhibit the photovoltaic effect, a phenomenon studied in physics, photochemistry, and electrochemistry. The photovoltaic effect is commercially used for electricity generation and as photosensors.

SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - can be a disability which affect a child or young person's ability to learn.

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North Somerset Council

Report to the Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 11 February 2026

Subject of Report: Treasury Management Strategy 2026-27

Town or Parish: ALL

Officer/Member Presenting: Mike Bell, Leader of the Council

Key Decision: Yes

Reason: Financial implications within the report are in excess of £500,000 and impact on all wards and communities within North Somerset.

Recommendations

The Cabinet is requested to;

Recommend to Council for approval;

- i) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27, as described throughout the report and shown in **Appendix 1**,
- ii) the Prudential Indicators for 2026/27, as shown in **Appendix 2**,
- iii) the change to the council's Minimum Revenue Provision approach from the straight line basis to the annuity basis effective from 1 April 2025, as shown in **3.2**
- iv) the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2026/27, as shown in **Section 3.3**

1. Summary of Report

The purpose of the report is to present the council's draft annual **treasury management strategy** (TMS) for the 2026/27 financial year for recommendation onto Council for consideration and approval, as required by statute.

The report contains details of;

- how the council plans to manage its cash-flows and resources in the year ahead to ensure effective treasury management,
- the proposed Prudential & Treasury Indicators for 2026/27, and
- the proposed policy for making Minimum Revenue Provision in respect of the repayment of the council's external debt, within the revenue budget.

2. Policy

The council's budget process should ensure that all resources are planned, aligned, and managed effectively to achieve the corporate aims and objectives of the council. The council's treasury related strategies link directly into the revenue and capital budget planning processes and all aim to support effective service delivery across the council, in this year, as well as across the medium term.

3. Details

3.1 Executive Summary

The treasury management strategy sets out how the council operates, and the processes followed which alleviate risk. The council's treasury activities have not significantly changed from previous years and **the council's approach to risk continues to be prudent**. The council's priorities for 2026/27 focus on maintaining or improving the council's financial resilience while aiming to mitigate financial risk areas.

The strategy has been updated to reflect changes in cashflows, capital expenditure and financing. The strategy is based on the current approved capital programme, as well as those being requested for approval in the Capital Strategy report for 2026/27. Should any further increases in borrowing or forward funding decisions subsequently be made beyond these levels, then further council approval would be required to re-state prudential indicators, and additional revenue resources identified to fund debt repayment costs.

There remains cash flow volatility due to uncertainty around timing of grant receipts and expenditure relating to some of our major capital projects. Financial modelling shows that the council will continue to hold surplus cash-flows over the short-term until such time as spending plans catch up with monies currently being held to fund them. The council is able to financially benefit from this by generating interest when the surplus funds are invested, and activity undertaken in recent months has meant that the council has been able to improve the budget situation in the current financial year.

The treasury management strategy illustrates the impact on the council's revenue budget which is critical given the council's financial position. The table in **Section 5** below summarises the revenue budget impacts, including capital financing costs (investment income, interest paid, and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)).

3.2 Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy review

Following a review of the council's approach to Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) this report seeks approval to change the council's approach to MRP as set out below.

Where the council funds capital expenditure with debt, it must put aside resources to repay that debt in later years. The amount charged to the revenue budget for the repayment of debt is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

The Local Government Act 2003 requires the council to have regard to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision (the MHCLG Guidance), most recently issued in April 2024. The broad aim of the MHCLG Guidance is to ensure that capital expenditure is financed over a period that is aligned with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits.

The guidance provides several options for calculating prudent MRP but is clear that other calculation methods may also be considered prudent. Straight line and annuity methods over the asset's useful life are the most used methods.

Current Minimum Revenue Provision Policy

The current MRP policy uses the straight line method based on the expected asset life, and has not been changed since 2017/18. The changes to the financial landscape which the council now faces, including recent increases in borrowing rates and inflationary impacts across all council service areas mean it is sensible to review the policy now.

Proposed Changes to existing Policy

For the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) that relates to pre-2008 capital spend it is proposed moving from a straight-line approach to an annuity method. For post-2008 capital expenditure it is also proposed moving to an annuity method, both for those assets with a residual CFR needing to be financed and for any new capital expenditure that may become subject to future MRP charges.

The guidance allows local authorities to change their MRP calculation methods going forward, but changes cannot be backdated to create an overpayment that results in a credit to the general fund. Provided the MRP policy change is approved in the financial year 2025/26 changes may apply with effect from the 1st April 2025 onwards.

Rationale for Changes

The annuity method is an acceptable method for making MRP and is explicitly mentioned in the statutory guidance on MRP. The annuity method spreads the total capital financing costs (MRP plus interest) evenly over the asset life, similar to a repayment mortgage. When MRP is made it increases the council's cash balances, therefore, reducing overall debt costs or increasing income from investment balances. The straight-line approach keeps MRP itself even, but as interest costs reduce over time, it front loads the total financing costs.

An approach where overall costs to council tax taxpayers over the life of the asset is spread evenly is more prudent as council tax payers are getting an even benefit from the asset's useful life. However, it should be noted that overall costs are slightly higher when using the annuity method as the principal is repaid more slowly resulting in higher overall interest costs. Conversely, when factoring in the time value of money the annuity method becomes a more suitable option.

Based on the council's capital financing requirement (CFR) at 31st March 2025, the charges for MRP under the revised and previous MRP policies is shown below:

	Existing 2025/26 MRP (£'000)	Proposed 2025/26 MRP (£'000)	Difference (£'000)
Pre-2008 Supported Borrowing	2,695	2,325	(370)
Post-2008 Prudential Borrowing	6,222	4,925	(1,297)
Finance leases	567	567	0
Ex-Avon Debt	416	416	0
Total	9,900	8,233	(1,667)

* These values relate to the 2025/26 revenue budget and will be updated for future years.

Overall MRP Payment Profile

The profile of total MRP payments expected over the next 50 years under both policies is shown in the table below:

	1-10 years (£'000)	11-20 years (£'000)	21-30 years (£'000)	31-40 years (£'000)	41-50 years (£'000)	Total (£'000)
Current policy	122,401	84,924	51,653	21,190	4,384	284,552
Revised policy	92,404	82,283	64,154	35,399	10,312	284,552
Saving (cost)	-29,997	-2,641	12,501	14,209	5,928	0

Conclusion

By adopting the annuity method, the council stands to benefit from a more balanced and sustainable approach to managing its debt-financed capital expenditure, while also optimising its revenue costs.

Moving to the annuity method for the CFR introduces a more balanced cost profile. Unlike the straight line method, which front-loads MRP costs, the annuity approach spreads costs evenly across the asset's life. This creates a smoother cost profile that aligns more closely with how the council, and its taxpayers benefit from capital investments over time. By spreading costs evenly across the life of an asset, the annuity method offers a fairer reflection of asset usage and associated costs, ensuring that today's and future council tax payers contribute in proportion to the benefits received.

By using the PWLB certainty rate available on the 1st April 2025 for the 2025/26 financial year in the annuity calculations, the council can achieve both short-term and long-term savings, of up to £30 million over the next 10 years.

These financial benefits help reinforce the decision to move towards an annuity approach, as it not only improves cost predictability but also provides a tangible financial benefit to the council's budget.

A change in policy will also produce reductions in MRP for future years capital spend with the change to annuity producing lower MRP until 2040/41 for expenditure incurred in the current financial year. This proposal is aligned to the council's draft revenue budget for 2026/27.

3.3 Revised Minimum Revenue Provision Statement

The MHCLG Guidance requires the council to approve an Annual MRP Statement each year and recommends several options for calculating a prudent amount of MRP. The council's policy adopts options recommended in the Guidance, as well as locally determined prudent judgements in applying the recommended methodologies.

MRP is calculated by reference to the capital financing requirement (CFR) which is the total amount of past capital expenditure that has yet to be permanently financed, noting that debt must be repaid and therefore can only be a temporary form of funding. The CFR is calculated from the council's balance sheet in accordance with the *Prudential Code for Capital Expenditure in Local Authorities*, 2021 edition.

It is recommended that the council applies the following policy to determine its MRP:

- a. For capital expenditure incurred before 1st April 2008, the MRP for 'Supported borrowing' will be determined by writing down the council's Capital Financing Requirement on an annuity basis using the PWLB certainty rate at the date of the policy change (1st April 2025) over the estimated average remaining life of the relevant assets.
- b. For capital expenditure incurred after 31st March 2008, the MRP for 'Prudential borrowing' will be determined by charging the expenditure over the expected useful life of the relevant asset on an annuity basis, starting in the year after the asset becomes operational.
- c. For assets acquired by finance leases, and for the transferred debt from Avon County Council, MRP will be determined as being equal to the element of the rent or charge that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.
- d. Where former operating leases have been brought onto the balance sheet due to the adoption of the IFRS 16 Leases accounting standard, and the asset values have been adjusted for accruals, prepayments, premiums and/or discounts, then the annual MRP charges will be adjusted so that the overall charge for MRP over the life of the lease reflects the value of the right-of-use asset recognised on transition rather than the liability.
- e. Capital expenditure incurred during 2026/27 will not be subject to an MRP charge until 2027/28 or later.

Capital loans

- f. For capital expenditure on loans to third parties which were made primarily for service purposes, the council will make nil MRP except as detailed below for expected credit losses. Instead, the council will apply the capital receipts arising from the repayments of the loan principal to finance the expenditure in the year they are received.
- g. For capital loans made on or after 7th May 2024 where an expected credit loss is recognised during the year, the MRP charge in respect of the loan will be no lower than the loss recognised. Where expected credit losses are reversed, for example on the eventual repayment of the loan, this will be treated as an overpayment.
- h. For capital loans made before 7th May 2024 and for loans where expected credit losses are not applicable, where a shortfall in capital receipts is anticipated, MRP will be charged to cover that shortfall over the remaining life of the assets funded by the loan.

Capital receipts

Proceeds from the sale of capital assets are classed as capital receipts, and are typically used to finance new capital expenditure. Where the council decides instead

to use capital receipts to repay debt and hence reduce the CFR, the calculation of MRP will be adjusted as follows:

- i. Capital receipts arising on the repayment of principal on capital loans to third parties will be used to lower the MRP charge in respect of the same loans in the year of receipt, if any.
- j. Capital receipts arising on the repayment of principal on finance lease receivables will be used to lower the MRP charge in respect of the acquisition of the asset subject to the lease in the year of receipt, if any.
- k. Capital receipts arising from other assets which form an identified part of the council's MRP calculations will be used to reduce the MRP charge in respect of the same assets over their remaining useful lives, starting in the year after the receipt is applied.
- l. Any other capital receipts applied to repay debt will be used to reduce MRP in 10 equal instalments starting in the year after receipt is applied.

3.4 Prudential Indicators

Under the Local Government Act 2003, and the associated CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, 'Prudential Indicators' relating to the revenue implications of capital programme decisions need to be approved by members and considered when setting the revenue and capital budgets.

The CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice also requires locally decided indicators relating to treasury activities to be approved. These indicators provide information to Members on the affordability of the council's borrowing plans, and whether the impact of treasury management actions on the council's revenue budget are sustainable. The indicators are detailed in **Appendix 2**.

4. Consultation

The Audit Committee has a key role to play in reviewing the council's treasury management arrangements and practices, and they routinely receive performance monitoring reports on the subject covering both prior and current years, as well as reports which provide an opportunity for discussion to take place to consider the proposed strategy for the year ahead. The latest reports were considered by the Committee in November 2025 and January 2026.

5. Financial Implications

Financial implications are contained throughout the report. Treasury management decisions impact on both the revenue budget and the balance sheet in current and future years. However, an additional summary has been included to provide a high-level overview of the key components linked with capital financing and investment decisions, which have been aligned with the Capital Strategy and medium term financial plan reports.

Table 5.1 – indicative budgets – capital financing and interest	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Estimate

	£000	£000
Interest payable on borrowing	6,048	7,324
Net interest receivable on investments	(5,527)	(8,532)
Minimum revenue provision	11,567	10,317
Total	12,088	12,010

* If actual levels of investments and borrowing, or actual interest rates, differ from those forecast, performance against budget will be correspondingly different.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

Under the Local Government Act 2003 s1, and s12, local authorities may invest money or borrow money:

- for any purpose relevant to their functions
- for prudent financial management

Under Local Government Act 2003 s2, and s13, local authorities must not:

- exceed their affordable borrowing limit
- borrow in foreign currency
- mortgage their property as security for loans borrowed

Under Local Government Act 2003 s3, s14, and s15, local authorities must:

- set and review affordable borrowing limits / authorised limits
- have regard to guidance published by MHCLG and CIPFA
 - MHCLG Investment Guidance
 - CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management
 - CIPFA Prudential Code

Treasury risk management at the council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the council's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to the CIPFA Code.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

The ESG investment policy is summarised in **Appendix 1** (Paragraph 4.6) and will not detract from the core functions that need to take place within the existing treasury management strategy, i.e., the management of cash-flows and also meeting the requirements within the approved revenue budget, but it will provide an opportunity to ensure that climate and other environmental implications are considered and reported on.

The council's ESG investment policy must still be compliant with the external and internal regulatory framework and would therefore continue to give focus to security and liquidity, then yield.

8. Risk Management

Members will be aware that there is a direct link between the levels of risk and the levels of return achieved on investment, although there are many other factors which also affect the capital financing budgets.

The council's treasury management activities expose it to a variety of financial risks, notably:

- a. credit risk – the risk that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the council. Includes bail-in risk – the risk that shareholders and depositors in banks and building societies bear losses in the event of counter-party's failure or reduction in net asset value,
- b. liquidity and re-financing risk – the risk that the council might not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments as they fall due,
- c. market risk (interest rate and price risks) – the risk that financial loss might arise for the council because of changes in such measures as interest rates, investment valuations, and stock market movements.

The council's Treasury Management Strategy sets out the council's approach to managing these risks. A summary of the risks relating to treasury management that the council is exposed to, and the mitigation arrangements in place through the Treasury Management Strategy, is detailed at **Appendix 3**.

The risk appetite of the council is low to give priority to the security of its investments. The council will also aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with desired levels of security and liquidity. It should be noted that the council's Treasury Management Strategy sets out how the council manages and mitigates these risks but cannot eliminate risks completely.

9. Equality Implications

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? N/A

10. Corporate Implications

The safeguarding of public money is critical to the council's reputation, and the measures contained within the report are intended to address member and public concerns and ensure an appropriate balance of return on investment whilst ensuring managing associated risks.

11. Options Considered

This report has been developed alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan and revenue budget and the Capital Strategy, which supports the capital programme, which means that decisions are fully integrated. It also sets out the council's expectation for interest rates and highlights the uncertainties and risks in the forecast due to market conditions.

The report considers those aspects of treasury policy that change annually or more frequently, highlighting the council's views or interpretation of factors that may influence treasury management decisions and proposes how these matters will be dealt with during 2026/27.

The council's Treasury Management Strategy is broadly consistent with the previous strategy and is developed from and complies with the council's Treasury Management Policy and takes account of the CIPFA code and MHCLG guidance referred to above.

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Appendices:

1. Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27
2. Prudential Indicators for 2026/27
3. Treasury Risk Register
4. Glossary of Terms

Background Papers:

Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 – Cabinet - February 2025

Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27 – Audit Committee 22 January 2026

Other relevant guidance includes:

- CIPFA – The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities 2021
- MHCLG – Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments (3rd edition) 2018
- CIPFA - Treasury Management in Public Services – Guidance notes for local authorities 2021

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Treasury management is the management of the council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The council has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the council's prudent financial management.
- 1.2 Treasury risk management at the council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the council's legal obligation under the *Local Government Act 2003* to have regard to the CIPFA Code.
- 1.3 Investments held for service purposes or for commercial profit are considered in the non-treasury investment strategy in Section 5.

2 STRATEGY OVERVIEW

- 2.1 Under the Local Government Act 2003, the council may invest money or borrow money:
- for any purpose relevant to its functions, and
 - for prudent financial management.
- 2.2 The council could potentially invest its money for three broad purposes:
- Treasury management investments – i.e., management of operational cashflows. Investment of surplus cash balances generated as a result of its day-to-day activities, for example when income is received in advance of expenditure,
 - Service investments - to support local public services by lending to, or buying shares in other organisations, and
 - Non treasury related investments - to earn investment income, usually rental income, and to provide capital appreciation, from a portfolio of property investments.
- 2.3 The Strategy for 2026/27 in respect of the following aspects of the treasury management function is based upon the S151 Officers views on risks and interest rates, supplemented with advice provided by the council's treasury advisors, currently Arlingclose Ltd.
- 2.4 The strategy covers:
- Section 3 - current treasury portfolio
 - Section 4 - the treasury investment strategy
 - Section 5 - the non-treasury investment strategy
 - Section 6 - the borrowing strategy
 - Section 7 - interest rates and economic outlook
 - Section 8 - other treasury management matters

3 CURRENT TREASURY PORTFOLIO

3.1 The Council's current treasury portfolio is as follows:

Table 1: Treasury Management balances within the balance sheet – 2025/26

	Current portfolio £m	Current portfolio £m	Ave Rate %
Long-term borrowing	111.1		4.13
Short-term borrowing	5.9		4.22
Total borrowing		117.0	4.11
Long-term investments	29.0		4.59
ST investments - in-house	128.3		4.26
ST investments – ESG	12.0		4.06
ST investments - Tradition	10.0		4.48
Total investments		179.3	4.31
Net (borrowing) / investments		62.3	

3.2 The maturity profile of the Council's borrowing, and investments is as follows (excluding Avon loan debt and lease liabilities):

Table 2: Maturity profile of the Council's borrowing and investments

MATURITY PROFILE	Long Term Debt £m	Investments £m	NET DEBT / (INVESTMENT) £m
Current year	£5.4	£150.3	(£144.9)
1-2 years	£5.0	£20.0	(£15.0)
2-5 years	£21.6	£9.0	£12.6
5-15 years	£58.6	£0.0	£58.6
15-25 years	£6.4	£0.0	£6.4
25-30 years	£5.0	£0.0	£5.0
30-35 years	£15.0	£0.0	£15.0
TOTALS	£117.0	£179.3	(£62.3)

4 TREASURY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

4.1 The council typically receives its income in cash (e.g., from taxes and grants) before it pays for its expenditure in cash (e.g., through payroll and invoices). It also holds reserves for future expenditure and collects local taxes on behalf of other local bodies and central government. These activities, plus the timing of borrowing decisions, lead to a cash surplus which is invested in accordance with guidance from CIPFA.

- 4.2 **Objectives:** Both the CIPFA Code and the MHCLG Guidance require councils to invest their treasury funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The council aims to be a responsible investor and will consider environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues when investing.
- 4.3 **Strategy:** The council expects to be a long-term borrower and new treasury investments will therefore be made primarily to manage day-to-day cash flows using short-term low risk instruments. The existing portfolio of strategic pooled funds will be maintained to diversify risk into different sectors and boost investment income.
- 4.4 The CIPFA Code does not permit local authorities to both borrow and invest long-term for cash flow management. But the council may make long-term investments for treasury risk management purposes, including to manage interest rate risk by investing sums borrowed in advance for the capital programme for up to three years; to manage inflation risk by investing usable reserves in instruments whose value rises with inflation; and to manage price risk by adding diversification to the strategic pooled fund portfolio.
- 4.5 The council's current investment strategy allows surplus cash balances to be managed by two treasury teams, each having distinct and separate controls and flexibilities. This allows the council to spread risk by investing in different financial products, and utilising experienced external cash managers, who do not have responsibilities for managing the council's daily cash-flows. The treasury teams are;
- a. Tradition UK Ltd
 - b. In-house Treasury Team
- 4.6 **ESG policy: *Environmental, social and governance*** (ESG) considerations are increasingly a factor in global investors' decision making, but the framework for evaluating investment opportunities is still developing and therefore the council's ESG policy does not currently include ESG scoring or other real-time ESG criteria at an individual investment level.
- 4.7 The council has developed a framework for ESG related investments through consultation with the Section 151 Officer, members of the Audit Committee and also the council's treasury management advisors Arlingclose. It is anticipated that the credit rating of security of such deposits would need to remain in line with the wider council policy however, where appropriate and at the council's discretion, some flexibility will be provided to allow for slightly longer durations of investment and potentially lower returns to support the ESG focus.
- 4.8 When investing in banks and funds, the council will prioritise banks that are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Banking and funds operated by managers that are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment, the Net Zero Asset Managers Alliance (temporarily suspended but has announced a resumption from January 2026), and/or the UK Stewardship Code.
- 4.9 The ESG investment policy will not detract from the core functions that need to take place within the existing treasury management strategy, i.e., the management of cash-flows and meeting the requirements within the approved revenue budget. The policy ensures that climate and other environmental implications are considered and reported on.

- 4.10 **Business models:** Under the IFRS 9 standard, the accounting for certain investments depends on the council's "business model" for managing them. The council aims to achieve value from its treasury investments by a business model of collecting the contractual cash flows and therefore, where other criteria are also met, these investments will continue to be accounted for at amortised cost.
- 4.11 **Approved counterparties:** The approved counterparties and notes are included in **Table 3** below, subject to the limits shown.

Table 3: Treasury investment counterparties and limits

Sector	Time limit	Counterparty limit ¹	Tradition limit
The UK Government	50 years	Unlimited	Unlimited
Local Authorities ³ & other government entities	25 years	£15m	£5m
Secured investments – government collateral*	25 years	£30m	£0m
Secured investments – other collateral*	10 years	£15m	£0m
Banks (unsecured) *	13 months	£15m	£5m
Building societies (unsecured) *	13 months	£10m	£5m
Registered providers (unsecured) *	5 years	£10m	£0m
Money market funds ² *	n/a	£15m	£0m
Strategic pooled funds (per fund)	n/a	£5m	£0m
Real estate investment trusts	n/a	£10m	£0m
ESG-focussed short term deposits	13 months	£6m	£0m
Other investments *	5 years	£10m	£0m

¹ limits shown are per organisation.

² as defined in the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations 2003

³ as defined in the Local Government Act 2003

Additional information on the above counterparty types may be found in the treasury management strategy report to Audit Committee in January 2026.

*** Minimum credit rating:** Treasury investments in the sectors marked with an asterisk will only be made with entities whose lowest published long-term credit rating is no lower than A-. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be considered.

For entities without published credit ratings, investments may be made either (a) where external advice indicates the entity to be of similar credit quality; or (b) to a maximum of £10,000,000 per counterparty as part of a diversified pool e.g. via a peer-to-peer platform.

- 4.12 **Operational bank accounts:** The council may incur operational exposures, for example through current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to any UK bank with credit ratings no lower than BBB- and with assets greater than £25 billion. These are not classed as investments but are still subject to

the risk of a bank bail-in, and balances will therefore be kept below £9m* per bank. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the council maintaining operational continuity.

- 4.13 * It is possible, rarely, that significant amounts of funding (for example government grants) may be received unexpectedly towards the end of a banking day, at which point it is not possible to place these funds with a suitable approved counterparty until the following day. This would not be considered a breach of the £9m limit provided the surplus cash is appropriately invested at the earliest opportunity on the following banking day.
- 4.14 **Risk assessment and credit ratings:** One of the ways that the council manages credit risk is by using credit ratings.
- 4.15 The council uses long-term credit ratings from the three main rating agencies, Fitch Ratings Ltd, Moody's Investors Service Inc and Standard & Poor's Financial Services LLC, to assess the risk of investment default. The lowest available credit rating will be used to determine credit quality.
- 4.16 Long-term ratings are expressed on a scale from AAA (the highest quality) through to D (indicating default). Ratings of BBB- and above are described as 'investment grade,' while ratings of BB+ and below are described as 'speculative grade.' The council's credit rating criteria are set to ensure that it is unlikely that the council will hold speculative grade investments, despite the possibility of repeated downgrades.
- 4.17 Credit ratings are obtained and monitored by the council's treasury advisers who will notify changes in ratings as they occur.
- 4.18 **Other information on the security of investments:** The council understands that credit ratings are good, but not perfect, predictors of investment default. Full regard will therefore be given to other available information on the credit quality of the organisations in which it invests, including credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support, reports in the quality financial press and analysis and advice from the council's treasury management adviser. No investments will be made with an organisation if there are substantive doubts about its credit quality, even though it may otherwise meet the above criteria.
- 4.19 **Reputational aspects:** The council is aware that investment with certain counterparties, while considered secure from a purely financial perspective, may leave it open to criticism, valid or otherwise, that may affect its public reputation, and this risk will therefore be considered when making investment decisions.
- 4.20 When deteriorating financial market conditions affect the creditworthiness of all organisations, as happened in 2008, 2020 and 2022, this is not generally reflected in credit ratings, but can be seen in other market measures. In these circumstances, the council will restrict its investments to those organisations of higher credit quality and reduce the maximum duration of its investments to maintain the required level of security. The extent of these restrictions will be in line with prevailing financial market conditions. If these restrictions mean that insufficient commercial organisations of high credit quality are available to invest the council's cash balances, then the surplus will be deposited with the UK Government, or with other local authorities. This will cause investment returns to fall but will protect the principal sum invested.

4.21 Investment Limits

- 4.22 The council's revenue reserves that may be deemed as 'available' and could potentially be called up to cover investment losses should the need arise are forecast to be £42 million on 31st March 2026 and £24 million on 31st March 2027, although it should be noted that these are currently being held for other purposes and would not expect to be needed. In order to limit the available reserves that may be put at risk in the case of a single default, the maximum that will be lent to any one organisation (other than the UK Government) will be £15 million. A group of entities under the same ownership will be treated as a single organisation for limit purposes.
- 4.23 Credit risk exposures arising from non-treasury investments, financial derivatives and balances in operational bank accounts count against the relevant investment limits.
- 4.24 A forward deal which commences on or after the maturity date of an existing deal will not count towards the relevant counterparty limit until after the commencement date. This will avoid any "technical" limit breaches. In reality, if a counterparty did not settle an existing deal at maturity, the council would not go ahead with the forward deal.
- 4.25 Limits are also placed on fund managers and foreign countries as below. Investments in pooled funds and multilateral development banks do not count against the limit for any single foreign country since the risk is diversified over many countries.

Table 4: Additional investment limits

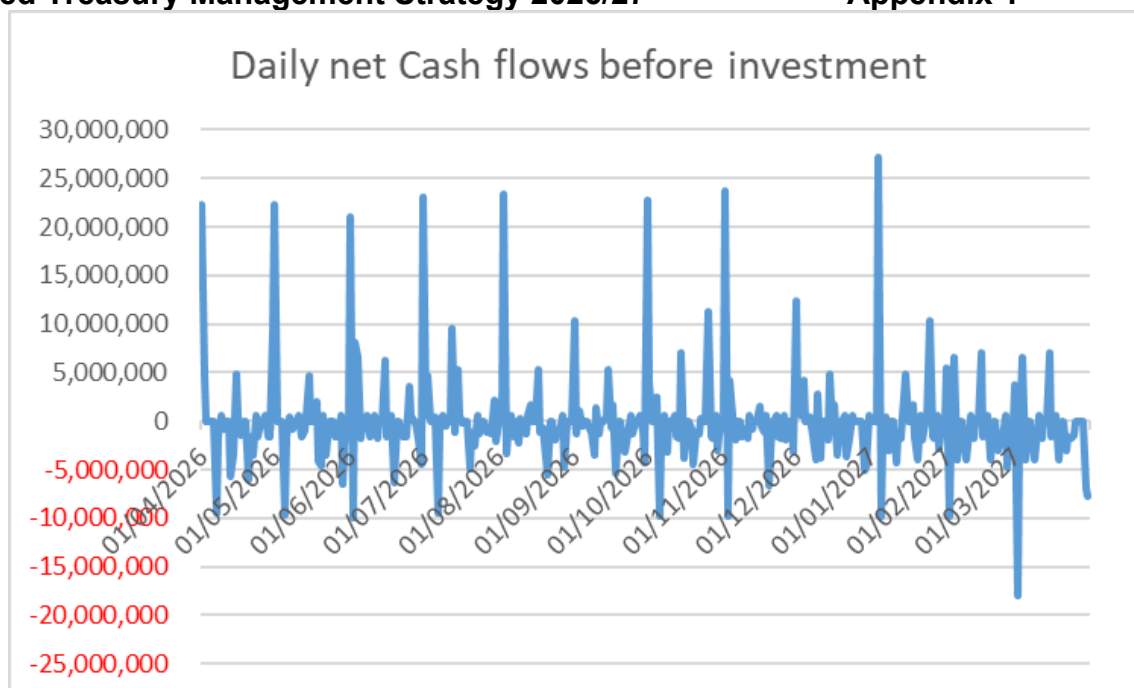
	Cash limit
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	£15m per manager
Foreign countries	£12m per country

4.26 Liquidity management

- 4.27 The council uses purpose-built cash flow forecasting software to determine the maximum period for which funds may prudently be committed. The forecast is compiled on a prudent basis, with receipts under-estimated and payments over-estimated to minimise the risk of the council being forced to borrow on unfavourable terms to meet its financial commitments. Limits on long-term investments are set by reference to the council's medium term financial plan and cash flow forecast.
- 4.28 The council will spread its liquid cash amongst providers (e.g., bank accounts and money market funds) to ensure that access to cash is maintained in the event of operational difficulties at any one provider.

4.29 Management of cash-flows

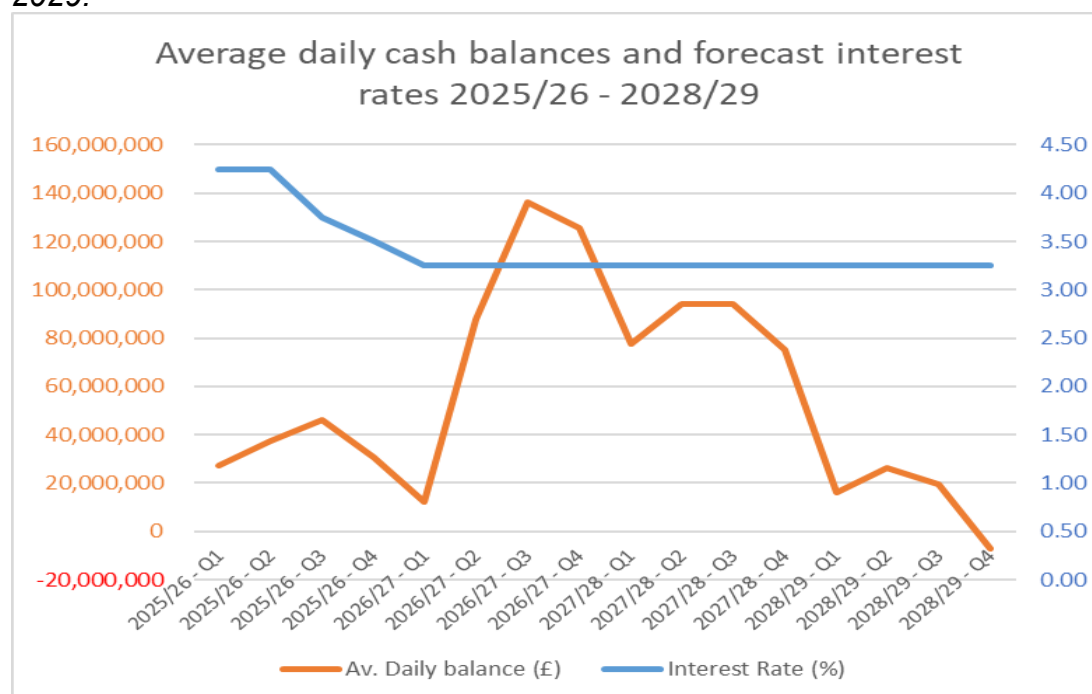
Table 5: Daily cash-flow movements



4.30 Although the cash-flow movements could be described as fluctuating or potentially even volatile, trends do begin to emerge when the nature of the movements are understood, for example;

- Significant inflows include council tax and business rates income, government grants and subsidy used to support and fund parts of the annual revenue budget including schools, contributions from stakeholders in respect of funding agreements (e.g., health partners), grants and contributions used to fund capital projects. Some of these inflows follow a regular pattern, which may be weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or quarterly and others do not, they simply arrive into the council's bank accounts.
- Significant outflows include monthly payments to staff, pension providers and government agencies, payments to suppliers 3 times each week covering both revenue and capital spending, payment of housing benefits, payments to major preceptors such as Fire, Police, Environment Agency, Town, and Parish councils.

4.31 The annual cash flow principles have been continued across the MTFP period, which has helped support the forecast investment income in the MTFP. Table 6 below shows the average daily cash balances increasing as the current investments mature over the next 12 months, and then start to fall over the remaining period.

Table 6: Extended average daily cash balances and interest rate assumptions 2025-2029.

- 4.32 The intended borrowing strategy for 2026/27 recommends that external borrowing is not taken, but spending will instead be offset against current surplus cash balances, i.e., it will be funded internally, which means that cash-flow forecasts for next year will decrease from current levels.

5 NON-TREASURY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

- 5.1 This investment strategy meets the requirements of statutory guidance issued by the government in January 2018 and focuses on the council's service investments and commercial property investments.

5.2 Service investments: Loans

- 5.3 Loans to social enterprises and local businesses may potentially be considered where they contribute to the council's overall objectives, through inclusion in the MTFP, treasury management and capital strategies. Where investment in regeneration and infrastructure in North Somerset clearly support local public services, and stimulate local economic growth, financing may also potentially be considered on projects that offer adequate security and returns, subject to the council having sufficient resources available to it at that time.
- 5.4 The only loan approved to date is an amount of £0.9m lent to a care home provider in 2008. The care provider has subsequently made repayments (including interest) in line with its agreed schedule. The outstanding balance at the time of writing is £0.8m.

5.5 Commercial investments: Property

- 5.6 The council's Commercial Investment Strategy was approved by Council in January 2019. In line with this strategy, the council has made two investments in commercial property to earn investment income, through a combination of rental and car parking income, whilst potentially providing capital appreciation over the long-term.

- 5.7 The investments made under the strategy were all agreed in previous years and consist of one outright purchase funded from long term borrowing, the North Worle District Centre, and one property acquired under a finance lease, the Sovereign Centre in Weston-super-Mare. There were no purchases or sale of assets during the 2025/26 financial year and there are no current plans to undertake any further commercial investments in the future.
- 5.8 In February 2021, the Executive approved a revised Sovereign Centre Business Plan, setting out the challenges, opportunities, and a new vision for the property. As part of this Business Plan, some of the vacant retail space within the centre has been converted into office space to diversify away from pure retail use.
- 5.9 Commercial property investments are likely to be less liquid than financial investments, as property may take time to sell in certain market conditions. The council's commercial property investments are considered sufficiently proportionate to its overall investment and borrowing balances to not be likely to significantly impact on the council's overall liquidity position.
- 5.10 The council has no plans to dispose of its commercial investment properties currently.

6 BORROWING STRATEGY

4.7 Background and local context:

- 4.8 Forecast changes to the capital financing requirement and borrowing forecasts are shown in the balance sheet analysis in the table below.

Table 7: Capital Financing Requirement vs forecast borrowing

	Forecast 2025/26 £m	Estimate 2026/27 * £m	Estimate 2027/28* £m	Estimate 2028/29* £m
Overall CFR*	205.2	239.8	280.8	289.3
Less: External Borrowing**	167.6	182.5	181.2	138.4
Positive value implies: Internal borrowing	37.6	57.3	99.6	150.9

*includes capital expenditure included in the Capital Strategy, but not yet approved

**includes finance leases and Ex-Avon loan debt that form part of the council's total debt

- 4.9 The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while usable reserves and working capital are the underlying resources available for investment. The council's current strategy is to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing.
- 4.10 The council's Capital Strategy forecasts indicate that it is likely to need to borrow to finance its planned capital expenditure. The decision of whether, and when, to take external borrowing will be made considering current and forecast interest rates. The council may choose to finance this borrowing requirement from its operational cash

resources, known as 'internal borrowing'. This reduces interest costs and exposure to other risks.

- 4.11 CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* recommends that the Authority's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast CFR over the next three years. The table in para 6.2 above shows that the Authority expects to comply with this recommendation during 2026/27.
- 4.12 **Summary of current position:** The council currently holds £117.0m of borrowing analysed in Section 3 above.
- 4.13 **Objectives:** The council's main objectives when borrowing will be to achieve a low but certain cost of finance, while retaining flexibility should plans change in future.
- 4.14 **Strategy:** Short-term interest rates have fallen over the past year, and are expected to fall a little further, and it is therefore likely to be more cost effective over the medium-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead.
- 4.15 During 2026 we will review all borrowings and debt facilities to ensure these continue to meet updated code requirements and deliver value for money for local taxpayers. The review will aim to ensure that we streamline our processes and decision making in order to maximise any contribution to the wider financial pressures faced by the council as well as to support the MTFP.
- 4.16 In addition, the council may borrow short-term loans to cover unplanned cash flow shortages.
- 4.17 The council has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the PWLB but will consider long-term loans from other sources including banks, pensions, and local authorities. PWLB loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield; the council intends to avoid this activity in order to retain its access to PWLB loans.
- 4.18 **Sources of borrowing:** the approved sources of long-term and short-term borrowing are:
- a) HM Treasury's PWLB lending facility (formerly the Public Works Loan Board)
 - b) National Wealth Fund Ltd (formerly UK Infrastructure Bank Ltd)
 - c) any institution approved for investments (see above)
 - d) any bank, building society or insurance company authorised to operate in the UK
 - e) any other UK public sector body
 - f) UK public and private sector pension funds (except the Avon Pension Fund)
 - g) capital market bond investors
 - h) retail investors via a regulated peer-to-peer platform
 - i) special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues
 - j) funds administered by the West of England Combined Authority including
 - i) Revolving Infrastructure Fund
 - ii) Local Growth Fund
 - iii) Economic Development Fund

- 4.19 **Other sources of debt finance:** In addition, capital finance may be raised by the following methods that are not borrowing, but may be classed as other debt liabilities:
- a) leases
 - b) private finance initiative schemes
 - c) sale and leaseback
 - d) similar asset based finance
- 4.20 Whilst the above deals with past or present borrowing requirements, it is also possible to borrow in advance of need where there is a clear business case for doing so and only for the approved capital programme or to finance future debt maturities, as permitted by the guidance. Borrowing in advance of need introduces additional credit and interest risk. Whilst there is no present intention to borrow in advance, all risks will be considered as part of any borrowing decision, should conditions favour such action.
- 4.21 **Debt rescheduling:** the PWLB allows authorities to repay loans before maturity and either pay a premium or receive a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. The council may take advantage of this and replace some loans with new loans, or repay loans without replacement, where this is expected to lead to an overall cost saving or a reduction in risk.
- ## 7 INTEREST RATES AND ECONOMIC OUTLOOK
- 4.22 **Economic background:** The most significant impacts on the council's treasury management strategy for 2026/27 are expected to include: the influence of the government's 2025 Autumn Budget, lower short-term interest rates alongside higher medium- and longer-term rates, slower economic growth, together with ongoing uncertainties around the global economy, stock market sentiment, and geopolitical issues.
- 4.23 The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) cut Bank Rate to 3.75% in December 2025, as expected. The vote to cut was 5-4, with the minority instead favouring holding rates at 4.0%. Those members wanting a cut judged that disinflation was established while those preferring to hold Bank Rate argued that inflation risks remained sufficiently material to leave rates untouched at this stage.
- 4.24 Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that the UK economy expanded by 0.1% in the third quarter of the calendar year, this was unrevised from the initial estimate. The most recent Monetary Policy Report (November) projected modest economic growth, with GDP expected to rise by 0.2% in the final calendar quarter of 2025. Annual growth is forecast to ease from 1.4% before improving again later, reflecting the delayed effects of lower interest rates, looser monetary conditions, stronger global activity, and higher consumer spending. The view of modest economic growth going forward was echoed by the Office for Budget Responsibility in its Economic and fiscal outlook published in line with the Autumn Statement which revised down its estimate of annual real GDP to around 1.5% on average between 2025 and 2030.
- 4.25 CPI inflation was 3.2% in November 2025, down from 3.6% in the previous month and below the 3.5% expected. Core CPI eased to 3.2% from 3.4%, contrary to forecasts of remaining at 3.6%. Looking forward, the MPC continues to expect

inflation to fall, to around 3% in calendar Q1 2026, before steadily returning to the 2% target by late 2026 or early 2027.

- 4.26 The labour market continues to ease with rising unemployment, falling vacancies and flat inactivity. In the three months to October 2025, the unemployment rate increased to 5.1%, higher than the level previously expected by the BoE, while the employment rate slipped to 74.9%. Pay growth for the same period eased modestly, with total earnings (including bonuses) growth at 4.7% and while regular pay was 4.6%.
- 4.27 **Credit outlook:** Credit Default Swap (CDS) prices, which spiked in April 2025 following President Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariff announcements, have since trended lower, returning to levels broadly consistent with their 2024 averages. Although CDS prices rose modestly during October and November, the overall credit outlook remains stable, and credit conditions are expected to remain close to the range seen over the past two years.
- 4.28 While lower interest rates may weigh on banks' profitability, strong capital positions, easing inflation, steady economic growth, low unemployment, and reduced borrowing costs for households and businesses all support a favourable outlook for the creditworthiness of institutions on (the authority's treasury management advisor) Arlingclose's counterparty list. Arlingclose's advice on approved counterparties and recommended investment durations is kept under continuous review and will continue to reflect prevailing economic and credit conditions.
- 4.29 **Interest rate forecast** (December 2025): Arlingclose, the council's treasury management adviser, currently forecasts that the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee will continue to reduce Bank Rate in 2026, reaching around 3.25%. This forecast reflects amendments made following the Autumn Budget and an assessment of the fiscal measures and their market implications, and following the BoE MPC meeting held on 18th December.
- 4.30 Long-term gilt yields, and therefore interest rates payable on long-term borrowing, are expected to remain broadly stable on average, though with continued volatility, and to end the forecast period marginally lower than current levels. Yields are likely to stay higher than in the pre-quantitative tightening era, reflecting ongoing balance sheet reduction and elevated bond issuance. Short-term fluctuations are expected to persist in response to economic data releases and geopolitical developments.

8 OTHER TREASURY MANAGEMENT MATTERS

- 4.31 The CIPFA Code requires the council to include the following in its treasury management strategy:
- 4.32 **Financial Derivatives:** Councils may make use of financial derivatives embedded into loans and investments both to reduce interest rate risk (e.g., interest rate collars and forward deals), and to reduce costs or increase income at the expense of greater risk (e.g., LOBO loans and callable deposits). The general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 removes much of the uncertainty over local authorities' use of standalone financial derivatives (i.e., those that are not embedded into a loan or investment).

- 4.33 In line with the CIPFA Code, the council will seek external advice and will consider that advice before entering into financial derivatives to ensure that it fully understands the implications.
- 4.34 **Markets in Financial Instruments Directive:** The council has retained professional client status with its providers of financial services, including advisers, banks, brokers, and fund managers, allowing it access to a greater range of services but without the greater regulatory protections afforded to individuals and small companies. Given the size and range of the council's treasury management activities, the Section 151 Officer believes this to be the most appropriate status.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Having adopted both the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice, and the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, the council is required follow the elements within the Guidance and set 'indicators' which demonstrate that it follows good practice and has implemented and operates within appropriate systems of control before making capital financing and treasury management decisions.

1.2 PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 'PRUDENTIAL CODE':

The Prudential Code aims to improve the transparency of investment decisions. The Code include the requirement to produce a Capital Strategy, and the inclusion of prudential indicators within the report to allow the reader to understand the forecast the council's overall debt levels, in conjunction with the capital programme and investment decisions, and how this external borrowing will be repaid.

1.2.1 Capital Expenditure

This indicator details the Capital Expenditure to be incurred by the council. The revised programme for 2025/26 and totals for the proposed programmes for 2026/27 to 2028/29, as set out in the Capital Strategy, are shown below.

Table 1.2.1: Capital expenditure in £ millions

	Forecast 2025/26 £m	Estimate 2026/27 £m	Estimate 2027/28 £m	Estimate 2028/29 £m
Capital investments (£m)	178.1	230.9	70.2	19.6

1.2.2 Capital Financing Requirement

The council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP, and capital receipts used to replace debt. The CFR is expected to increase by £34.6m during 2026/27. Based on the forecast figures for expenditure and financing, the council's estimated CFR is as follows:

Table 1.2.2: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement in £ millions

	Forecast 2025/26 £m	Estimate 2026/27 £m	Estimate 2027/28 £m	Estimate 2028/29 £m
CFR	205.2	239.8	280.8	289.3
Less: CFR re finance leases	23.4	22.8	22.1	21.5
Less: CFR re ex Avon debt	10.0	9.6	9.2	8.8
Loans CFR	171.8	207.4	249.4	258.9

Projected levels of the council's total outstanding debt (which comprises borrowing, leases and transferred debt) are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).

1.2.3 Actual external debt and the Capital Financing Requirement

In this indicator, projected levels of the council's total outstanding external debt (which comprises borrowing and leases) are compared with the Capital Financing Requirement. The Capital Financing Requirement measures the council's underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose for the current and future year. The actual Capital Financing Requirement as at the year-end is included in each year's statutory accounts.

Table 1.2.3: Gross external debt and the Capital Financing Requirement in £ millions

	Forecast 2025/26 £m	Estimate 2026/27 £m	Estimate 2027/28 £m	Estimate 2028/29 £m
CFR	205.2	239.8	280.8	289.3
Total debt (incl leases and ex-Avon)	167.7	182.5	181.3	138.4

Statutory guidance is that total debt should remain below the Capital Financing Requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen from the table above, the council expects to comply with this requirement in the medium-term.

1.2.4 Borrowing and the Liability Benchmark

Liability benchmark: To compare the Authority's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of £50m at each year-end. This benchmark is currently £57.1m and is forecast to rise to £188.1m over the next three years.

The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. The liability benchmark itself represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

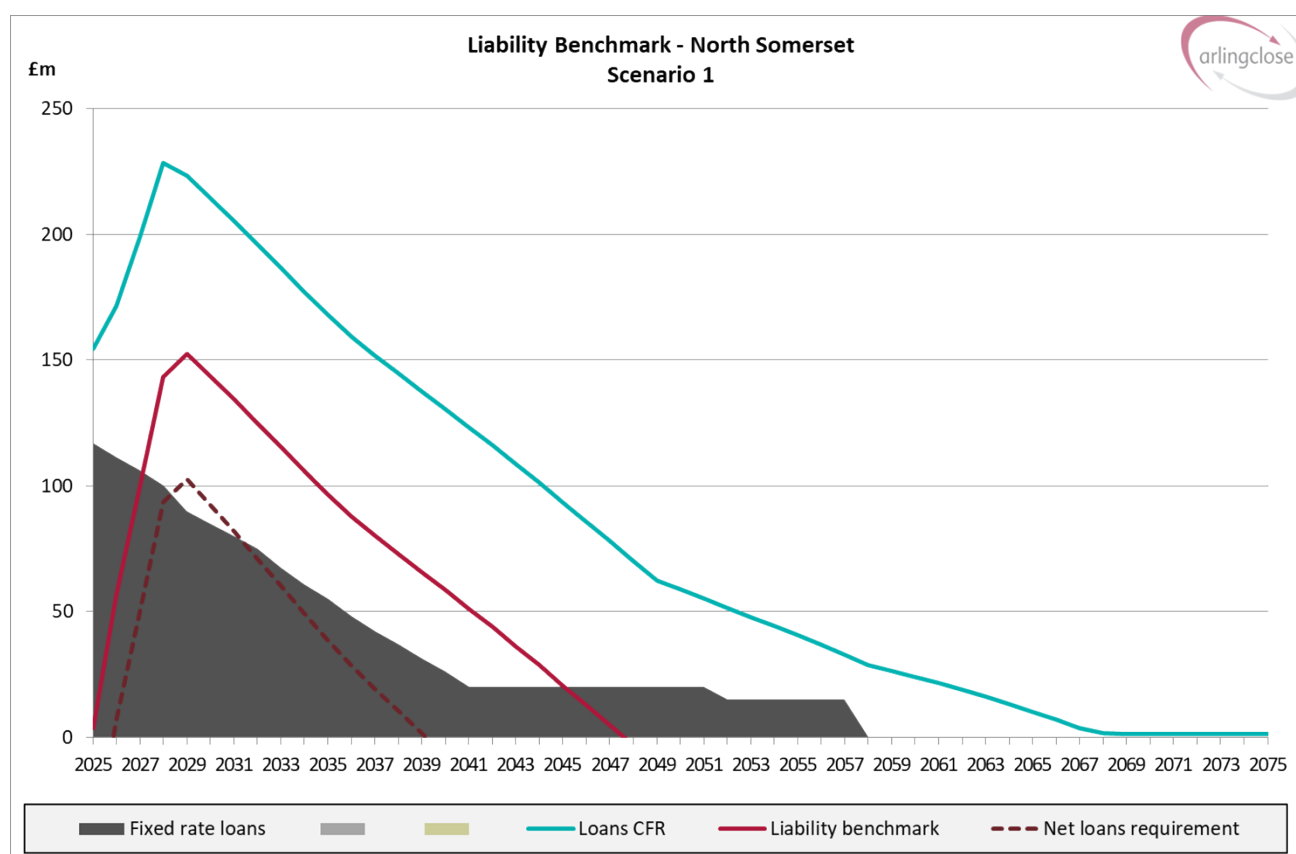
Table 1.2.4: Borrowing and the Liability Benchmark in £ millions

	Forecast 2025/26 £m	Estimate 2026/27 £m	Estimate 2027/28 £m	Estimate 2028/29 £m
"Loans CFR" from 1.2.2 above	171.8	207.4	249.4	258.9
Less: Balance sheet resources	164.7	148.9	134.9	120.8
Net loans requirement	7.1	58.5	114.5	138.1
Plus: Liquidity allowance	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0

Liability benchmark	57.1	108.5	164.5	188.1

The liquidity allowance has been calculated as the strategic pooled funds balance of £10m plus an amount that we don't want cash balances to fall below. This would therefore be around £50m.

Following on from the medium-term forecasts in table 1.2.4 above, the long-term liability benchmark assumes no capital expenditure funded by borrowing after 2028/29 minimum revenue provision on new capital expenditure based on asset life and income, expenditure and reserves all increasing by inflation of 2.5% a year. This is shown in the chart below together with the maturity profile of the council's existing borrowing:



The chart is indicating that the current debt portfolio (the grey shaded area) is below the projected borrowing requirement (the red line, liability benchmark) illustrated where the red line is above the top of the grey area. The difference between the two is the borrowing requirement necessary to fund the capital programme and maintain the required level of investments. The analysis currently suggests that new debt will have an amortising structure and a financial maturity around 20 years, but officers will assess the requirement and external environment on an on-going basis to match the borrowing requirement in the most appropriate manner.

The actual net borrowing requirement will change based on many factors including, timing of delivery against the approved capital programme, the level of balance sheet resources available, (e.g., new funding from government, or changes to spending patterns).

Whilst borrowing may be above the liability benchmark, strategies involving borrowing which is significantly above the liability benchmark carry higher risk.

1.2.5 Authorised borrowing limit and Operational limit

The council is required to set an 'affordable borrowing limit' (also termed the 'authorised limit for external debt') each year. In line with statutory guidance, a, lower, "operational boundary" is also set, as a warning level should debt approach the affordable borrowing limit.

The **authorised limit** is the 'affordable borrowing limit' which the council is required to set in section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003 and cannot be exceeded without acting ultra vires. The authorised limit is set at a higher level than the operational boundary to provide headroom for unexpected borrowing requirements.

The **operational boundary/ limit** should be the council's best estimate of the most likely, prudent, maximum levels of debt to be held during the years in question. The boundary can be exceeded in the short-term should the council need to undertake temporary borrowing, or debt rescheduling, but should not be exceeded for new long-term borrowing proposals.

Table 1.2.5: Authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt in £ millions

	Forecast 2025/26 £m	Estimate 2026/27 £m	Estimate 2027/28 £m	Estimate 2028/29 £m
Authorised limit - borrowing	203.0	197.0	163.0	119.0
Authorised limit – leases & ex-Avon debt	60.0	60.0	70.0	70.0
Authorised limit – total external debt	263.0	267.0	233.0	189.0
Operational boundary – borrowing	183.0	167.0	145.0	101.0
Operational boundary – leases & ex-Avon debt	50.0	65.0	65.0	65.0
Operational boundary – total external debt	233.0	232.0	210.0	166.0

It is currently estimated that long-term borrowing at the end of 2025/26 will be **£145.0m** (PWLB debt £111.1m, Salix £0.1m, Ex Avon loan debt £10.0m, and finance leases £23.4m, other council £0.4m).

Treasury Management

The council's Treasury Management Strategy aims to keep sufficient, but not excessive, cash available to meet the council's spending needs, while managing the associated risks. Surplus cash is invested until required to produce a return, while shortages of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account.

The council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. Due to decisions taken in the past, the council currently has £117.0m external borrowing, charging an average interest rate of 4.11%, and £179.3m treasury investments, earning an average rate of 4.31%.

1.2.6 Affordability - Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans, the MRP, and loans fund repayments are charged to revenue, offset by any investment income receivable. The net annual charge is known as the council's financing costs. In this indicator, financing costs are compared to the net revenue stream i.e., the amount funded from council tax, business rates and general government grants, to provide a measure of the affordability of the council's forecast borrowing.

Table 1.2.6: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

	Forecast 2025/26 £m	Estimate 2026/27 £m	Estimate 2027/28 £m	Estimate 2028/29 £m
Net Financing costs (£m)	12.1	12.0	12.5	12.5
Proportion of net revenue stream	4.9%	5.0%	5.2%	5.2%

The Treasury Management and investment indicators are included in this report below.

1.3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS: 'TREASURY CODE'

The council measures and manages its exposures to treasury management risks using the following indicators.

1.3.1 Security: Credit risk indicator: The council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit score of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

Table 1.3.1: Credit risk indicator:

Credit risk indicator	Target
Portfolio average credit rating	A-

1.3.2 Interest rate exposures - This indicator is set to control the council's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interest rates will be:

Table 1.3.2: Interest rate risk indicator:

Interest rate risk indicator	Limit (£m)
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	2.0
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	2.0

The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at new market rates.

1.3.3 Maturity structure of borrowing Refinancing risk is the risk that a borrower cannot refinance by borrowing to repay existing debt. To address this risk, limits are set of the proportions of the council's borrowing which are due to fall due in specified periods.

Table 1.3.3: Upper & lower limits on borrowing maturities, as a % of total borrowing:

Maturity Structure of Borrowing	Upper	Lower
Under 12 months	50%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	30%	0%
24 months and within five years	40%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	50%	0%
10 years and above	100%	0%

Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

1.3.4 Long-term treasury management investments: The purpose of this indicator is to control the council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The prudential limits on the long-term treasury management investments will be:

Table 1.3.4: Long term treasury management investments in £ millions:

Price risk indicator	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	No fixed date
Limit on principal invested with maturities longer than 365 days beyond year end	£40m	£40m	£40m	£10m

Long-term investments with no fixed maturity date include strategic pooled funds but exclude money market funds and bank accounts with no fixed maturity date as these are considered short-term.

1.4 NON-TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS: 'INVESTMENT GUIDANCE'

The council has set the following quantitative indicators to allow elected members and the public to assess the council's total risk exposure resulting from its investment decisions.

1.4.1 Total risk exposure: The first indicator below shows the council's total exposure to potential investment losses. This includes amounts the council is contractually committed to lend but have yet to be drawn down and guarantees the council has issued over third-party loans.

Table 1.4.1: Total investment exposure in £ millions

Total investment exposure	Actual Held as at 31/03/25 £m	Forecast Held as at 31/03/26 £m	Forecast Held as at 31/03/27 £m
Treasury management investments	163.3	123.0	73.0
Service investments: Loans	0.8	0.8	0.8
Commercial investments: Property*	18.4	18.4*	18.4*
TOTAL EXPOSURE	182.5	142.2	92.2

* Commercial investment properties are re-valued annually by the council's valuers - valuations as at 31/3/26 are not yet available and cannot be forecast with reasonable certainty.

1.4.2 How investments are funded - Current government guidance is that these indicators should include how investments are funded. Since the council does not normally associate particular assets with particular liabilities, this guidance is difficult to comply with.

In accordance with best professional practice, North Somerset Council does not associate its borrowing with particular items or types of expenditure. The council manages its treasury position, borrowings, and investments in accordance with its approved Treasury Management Strategy and practices. In day-to-day cash management, no distinction is made between revenue cash and capital cash. External borrowing arises because of all the financial transactions of the council, and not simply those arising from capital spending. The council may choose to finance capital expenditure from its existing operational cash resources, rather than undertaking external borrowing, to minimise interest costs.

1.4.3 Rate of return received on investments This indicator shows the investment income received less the associated costs, including the cost of borrowing where appropriate, as a proportion of the sum initially invested. Note that due to the complex local government accounting framework, not all recorded gains and losses affect the revenue account in the year they are incurred.

Table 1.4.3: Investment rate of return (net of all costs)

Investments net rate of return	Actual 2024/25 %	Forecast 2025/26 %	Forecast 2026/27 %
Treasury management investments	5.89	4.18	3.68
Service investments: Loans	6.89	6.03	5.53
Commercial investments: Property	0.00	(0.07)	0.90
ALL INVESTMENTS	5.36	3.75	3.44

Risk Management

Appendix 3

	Risk area	Initial Risk Score			Potential mitigation	Risk Score After Mitigation		
		Likelihood	Impact	Score		Likelihood	Impact	Score
1	Credit risk - Loss of principal and/or interest due to counter-parties not being able to meet principal / interest payments as they fall due. Includes losses due to 'bail in' requirements. - Potential delays in being able to access funds. - Emerging markets carry a higher risk of financial loss than more developed markets, as they may have less developed legal, political, economic or other systems.	4	5	20	- Measurement of risk (use of credit ratings, CDS spreads, balance sheet analysis). - Monitoring of TM advisor advice, news, discussions with brokers, and reacting to events (e.g. both trading and regulatory). - Setting appropriate lending limits per counter-party re amounts, period and country of investment. - Diversification between lenders, lender types, countries. - Exposure to equity and tradable debt instruments only through diversified funds.	2	5	10
2	Liquidity risk Running out of accessible cash, leading to inability to make payments as they are due. - Needing to borrow at higher cost than otherwise available. - Needing to sell assets / investments at short notice / at lower prices. - Not having available counter-parties to invest in.	3	4	12	- Daily cash flow forecasting. - Overdraft facility agreed. - Ready access to sources of cash from e.g. PWLB, other local authorities and banks and building societies. - Holding investments that can be readily realised.	2	4	8
3	Interest rate risk The ongoing impacts associated with higher interest rates, which could increase borrowing costs or provide an opportunity to increase returns on external investments.	3	5	15	The council's capital strategy will aim to manage capital spending within an overall affordability envelope which means that it could scale back on spending in other areas if borrowing rates increase beyond budget levels.	2	5	10
4	Inflation risk The value of cash balances is eroded over time due to inflation (notably when interest rates on investments are lower than inflation)	4	4	16	- Monitoring of TM advisor advice, news, discussions with brokers re economic outlook, and expected inflation and related interest rate movements. - Identify balances not likely to be needed in the short term for operational cash flows, and invest these balances in longer term to generate sufficient income to at least match inflation.	3	4	12
5	Currency risk The risk of loss from fluctuating foreign exchange rates when an investor has exposure to foreign currency or in foreign-currency-traded investments	3	3	9	- Local authorities are not allowed to borrow or invest in foreign currencies. All transactions must be in sterling.	1	1	1
6	Regulatory and political risk Risk that changes in regulations or legislation may have an adverse impact on the Council's finances, including: - Uncertainty in the economic outlook, and hence uncertainty over future interest rates and economic growth, and hence inflation, and government expenditure. - Changes in PWLB / other borrowing rates impact on the Council's borrowing costs - Changes in PWLB regulations limit availability/criteria of borrowing. - Changes in MiFID 2 regulatory requirements may increase costs and decrease access to markets.	4	3	12	- Monitoring of TM advisor advice, news, discussions with brokers, and reacting to events (e.g. both trading and regulatory). - On-going professional training and development of treasury management officers. - On-going training and updates to members on Treasury Management. - Regular review and update of overall Treasury Management Strategy. - Regular review and update of mix of borrowing and investments held to ensure the portfolio continues to meet the objectives of the Treasury Management Strategy.	3	3	9

Authorised Limit – the maximum amount of external debt at any one time in the financial year.

Bank Rate – the Bank of England base rate.

Capital Financing Requirement – The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) is the underlying need to borrow money. If the council incurs capital expenditure without an immediate resource to pay for it (e.g. a grant or a capital receipt), it results in the need to borrow money. It may not be necessary to take additional borrowing immediately to pay for the capital expenditure, but the council's underlying need to borrow, (its CFR), will increase.

CIPFA - the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The institute is one of the leading professional accountancy bodies in the UK and the only one which specialises in the public sector. It is responsible for the education and training of professional accountants and for their regulation through the setting and monitoring of professional standards. Uniquely among the professional accountancy bodies in the UK, CIPFA has responsibility for setting accounting standards for a significant part of the economy, namely local government.

CLG – Communities and Local Government – see MHCLG.

Counterparty – the organisation the council is investing with.

Credit Rating – an assessment of the credit worthiness of an institution.

Creditworthiness – a measure of the ability to meet debt obligations.

ESG – Environmental, Social and Governance based investment decisions.

Finance Lease - a finance lease is a lease that is primarily a method of raising finance to pay for assets, rather than a genuine rental. The latter is an operating lease. The key difference between a finance lease and an operating lease is whether the lessor (the legal owner who rents out the assets) or lessee (who uses the asset) takes on the risks of ownership of the leased assets. The classification of a lease (as an operating or finance lease) also affects how it is reported in the accounts.

Gilts – long term fixed income debt security (bond) issued by the UK Government and traded on the London Stock Exchange.

MHCLG – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Government department that sets policy on supporting local government, communities and neighbourhoods, regeneration, housing, planning building and the environment and fire.

Minimum Revenue Provision - In order to reduce the CFR, the council has a statutory duty to make a “prudent provision” for the repayment of debt. This takes the form of a charge to the revenue account, called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The MRP spreads the costs of borrowing and helps to ensure that the council can service the debt associated with the current and historic capital programmes.

Money Market - the market in which institutions borrow and lend.

Money Market Rates – interest rates on money market investments.

Ninety-One – one of the council's cash managers who invest in multi-asset funds. They were previously known as Investec.

Operational Boundary – the most likely, prudent but not worst-case scenario of external debt at any one time.

Pooled Funds – investments are made with an organisation who pool together investments from other organisations and apply the same investment strategy to the portfolio. Pooled fund investments benefit from economies of scale, which allows for lower trading costs per pound, diversification, and professional money management.

Prudential Code – a governance procedure for the setting and revising of prudential indicators. Its aim is to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of the council are affordable, prudent, and sustainable and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good practice.

Prudential Indicators – indicators set out in the Prudential Code that calculates the financial impact and sets limits for treasury management activities and capital investment.

PWLB (Public Works Loans Board) - a central government agency which provides long and medium-term loans to local authorities at interest rates only slightly higher than those at which the Government itself can borrow. Local authorities can borrow to finance capital spending from this source.

Sovereign – the countries the council can invest in.

Tradition UK Ltd – is one of the council's cash managers who manage £10m of investments on our behalf. Tradition place funds in fixed term cash deposits with a range of financial institutions.

Treasury Management – the management of the council's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risk associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance with those risks.

Treasury Management Practices – schedule of treasury management functions and how those functions will be carried out.

Useful economic life (UEL) – an assessment of how long an asset is expected to remain useful to the asset owner and allows for the cost of said asset to be spread across the expected life of the asset.

Variable Net Asset Value money market funds – the principal invested may fluctuate below that invested.

North Somerset Council

Report to the Council

Date of Meeting: 24 February 2026

Subject of Report: Council Tax Support Scheme

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Leader of the Council

Key Decision: N/A

Reason:

This is not an Executive report

Recommendations

That council approves the adoption of the revised Council Tax Reduction scheme as outlined below (with maximum contribution levels remaining at 67.5%), to take effect from 1 April 2026.

1. Summary of Report

The current Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR) was updated in 2025 to move towards an income-banded scheme, making it easier for customers to understand the policy and reducing the frequency of Council Tax bill reissues, thereby decreasing administrative effort and costs. However, the level of support remained unchanged for most customers.

The Council has been made aware through budget monitoring reports that urgent solutions must be identified to address North Somerset Council's financial challenges and avoid issuing a section 114 notice, which is required when an authority's expenditure in a financial year is likely to exceed its resources. One solution is the redesign of the current CTR Scheme and therefore options were developed and consulted upon which could achieve financial savings.

Specialists and lead officers have designed a new discretionary scheme to align the scheme expenditure with the council budget and also offers a range of mitigations for the impacted residents. External views have been sought during a public consultation with adjustments made to the scheme and mitigations. Before the publication of the consultation, elected members and senior officers were engaged via briefings and policy development on the details and viability of options for reducing CTS expenditure from 1 April 2026.

2. Policy

The Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme helps households on low incomes to pay their Council Tax, and the discretionary scheme was adopted by the North Somerset Council on 14th January 2019. Under the current scheme, a working-age household liable for Council

Tax could get up to 75.5% of the charge paid through the scheme, depending on their circumstances. (Working-age is anyone under Pension Credit age).

The scheme costs approximately £12.5 million per year and is based upon the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (England) Regulations 2012. The scheme is an income-banded scheme. The current CTR scheme helps 11,250 low-income households to pay their Council Tax, of which 6,400 are working age.

Since 2012/13, local authorities have been permitted to determine a local scheme for reductions in council tax to replace the council tax benefit scheme. For more information on how the current scheme operates, please see [The Council Tax Reduction Schemes \(Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#). This scheme must be retained by all councils in respect of pensioner households (the “prescribed” scheme), whereas local authorities are free to determine an appropriate local scheme for working-age households.

The localisation of Council Tax Reduction in 2012 allows Local Authorities to modify the scheme for working age households during an annual review and approval process which then feeds into the council’s budget-setting process. Detailed work, including modelling and consultation, has been undertaken to support the annual process for the 2026/27 financial year. However, it is important to note that the values contained in the report do include an estimated council tax increase for 2026/27 but no adjustments from the annual benefits uprating.

3. Details

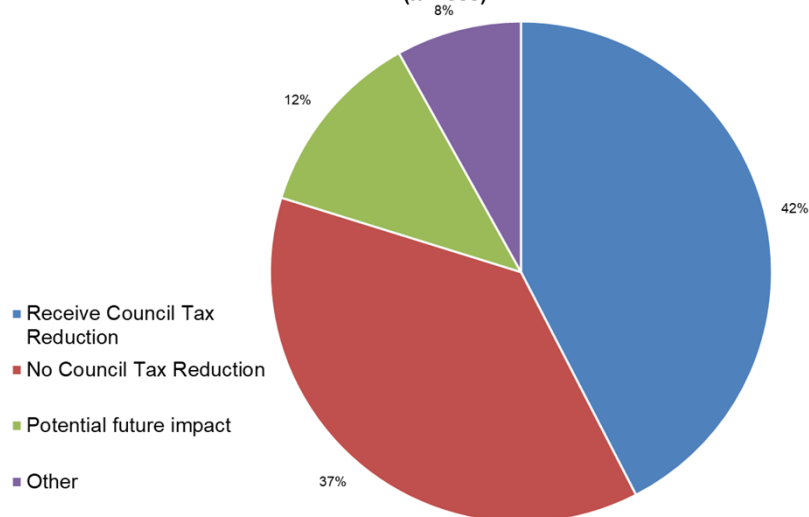
3.1 Approach

North Somerset Council is facing both immediate financial challenges and sustained pressures over the life of its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

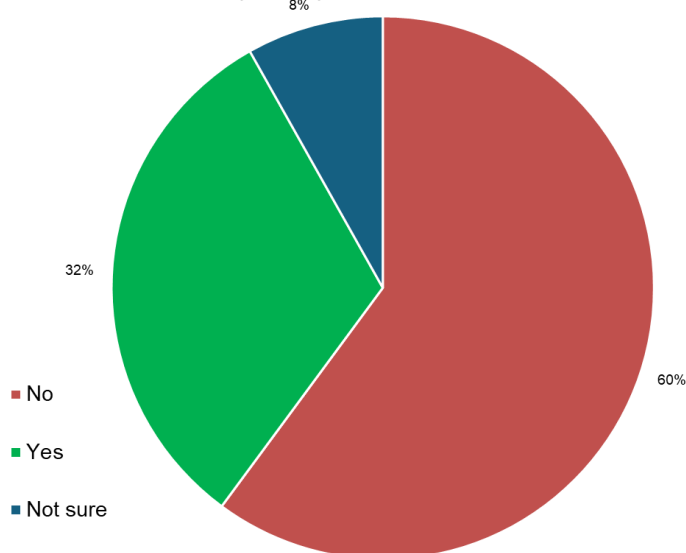
Research and profiling of possible solutions were identified to mitigate these pressures. Following the 2024/25 objective to simplify the scheme, which has led to increased council tax collections, the decision was made to identify a clear, comprehensible solution. On this basis, the recommended solution seeks to ensure parity for all customers by applying a 8% reduction in contribution levels across all income bands of the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Proposals to modify the scheme and achieve savings were then subject to a six-week public consultation, which resulted in the following opinion:

Why households are interested in the consultation (household circumstances)
(n = 355)



Views on proposed reduction to council tax support
(n = 331)



3.2 Other Local Authority Schemes

Research into schemes offered by other local authorities indicates that radically different approaches are used across the country and that the North Somerset scheme is financially more generous than some others.

3.3 Summary of the proposed scheme

Band	Monthly earned income	Discount percentage 2025/26	Protected group * 2025/26	Discount percentage proposed 2026/27	Protected group * proposed 2026/27
1	£0	75.5%	75.5%	67.5%	67.5%
2	£0.01-£500.00	55%	65%	47%	57%
3	£500.01 - £800	42%	65%	34%	57%
4	£800.01 - £1,100	30%	65%	22%	57%
5	£1,100.01 - £1,400	18%	65%	10%	57%
6	£1,400.01 and above	0%	0%	0%	0%

1. Reduce contribution rates by 8% across all income bands.
2. Provide a maximum level of support of 57% for the protected group for households with disabled Children. However, households with disabled children and no earned income, will receive the maximum level of support at 67.5%.

The design will generate a £242k saving, equating to a 4.2% reduction for working age customers or a 1.9% overall cut in CTR provision.

This design process has considered the outcomes of a CTR Impact Analysis and financial profiling to demonstrate how the scheme could be operated to meet residents' needs, align with the principles of other local authority schemes, and remain affordable for North Somerset.

North Somerset Council has considered the equality impacts on different protected or significant groups when applying the various calculations to the various benefit schemes (Housing Benefit or Universal Credit). The following scheme criteria are considered to support equality and therefore do not discriminate:

- The NSC scheme ignores all income other than earned income (wages).
- Therefore, in Universal Credit cases, if there is no earned income, a claimant is entitled to the maximum CTR. Same as if the claimant was previously in receipt of a legacy passported benefit.
- The scheme ignores all other income; any disability elements, etc, are ignored and not used to 'means test'/reduce entitlement.
- Our scheme isn't discriminatory as we consider earned income equally across all claimants.

Internal and external resources (InBest, Liberata and Northgate) have been used to investigate and redesign the scheme. The analysis of the impacts has been the subject of a public consultation and member input. The overall contribution level is decreasing by 8% across all income bands, resulting in all households experiencing a reduction in support.

3.4 Introduce a range of mitigations

The scheme will introduce short-term mitigations to support households who are most vulnerable and struggling to pay their council tax bill by offering, for example, a Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Fund. There are several advice and support mechanisms for all residents, and the council has introduced a Benefits Calculator tool to help residents access benefits they may not be currently claiming.

3.5 Social Value

The scheme is administered on behalf of the council by Liberata, which demonstrates Social Value to the local community through several mechanisms. Primarily, this is achieved via the FirstSteps service, the ethical debt recovery scheme delivered in partnership with the Citizens Advice North Somerset (CANS).

3.6 Timeline

The timeline below demonstrates the activity completed and remaining:

- First draft of the Equality Impact Assessment 7 Nov 2025
- Finalise Consultation document 7 Nov 2025
- Share proposal with the Leader 18 Nov 2025
- Member briefing 25 Nov
- Public consultation 26 Nov – 6 Jan 2026 (six weeks)
- Finalise scheme adjustments 12 Jan 2026
- Consultation response and report publication [CH] 26 Jan 2026
- Create the Council Report [SA] 22 Jan 2026
- Configure system parameters for annual billing and arrange communication campaigns to advise of changes ahead of billing 6 Feb 2026
- **Final Report and scheme to Full Council for approval alongside budget 24 Feb 2026**
- Communications via social media, the council app and the press.
- Update & train customer services on the expected impact triggered by annual bills 27 Feb 2026
- Issue annual bills in March 2026

4. Consultation

The Council was required to publish a draft scheme and consult both major preceptors and other people it considers likely to have an interest in the scheme before agreeing to a scheme. The consultation considered reducing all contribution rates by 8%. The consultation process ended on 6 Jan 2025.

The consultation period was sufficient to allow respondents to properly consider the impact and respond. Current legislation allows authorities until 11 March each year to have their CTR Scheme adopted by Full Council.

A six-week consultation is required as a minimum. Extending the consultation further would have prevented the Council from making computer system updates, testing the changes, and providing the opportunity to implement them into the live database before Annual Billing.

Case law has determined that consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage, sufficient reasons and information must be given to permit intelligent consideration and an understanding of impact to respond. Adequate time must be provided for consideration and response, and the consultation outcome must be conscientiously considered when deciding whether to adopt the proposal.

The following key findings were identified from the responses:

- Most respondents expressed concerns about the financial hardship the proposed changes would cause, particularly for low-income households, disabled individuals, and single-parent families.

- A significant number highlighted the additional costs associated with disability and the risk of increased poverty and debt.
- Several respondents suggested alternative approaches, such as a sliding scale of support or a higher council tax for wealthier households, while others called for greater efficiency in council spending.
- A smaller number of respondents supported the proposal, citing the need to balance the council's budget and encourage financial independence.
- Neutral or mixed feedback was less common but included calls for fairness and shared responsibility in funding council services.
- Overall, the responses reflected a strong concern for the community's most vulnerable members and a desire for the council to consider alternative approaches to achieving its financial goals.

In response, the council has taken the following into consideration to mitigate the changes:

- Further promotion of the Debt triage / Benefit calculator tool
- Create a £160k Council Tax Hardship Fund* - Other councils have implemented similar funds as an effective short-term relief measure that promotes financial inclusivity and reduces long-term costs associated with debt recovery
- Direct FirstSteps resources to support impacted households
- To encourage recipients into work, the council will participate and observe the national campaigns 'Get Britain Working' and 'Connect to Work'
- Engage and support partnership organisations – continuation of the CAB partnership supported with additional resource funding*
- Data-driven proactive campaign to support resident advice and benefit maximisation (CAB Partnership)
- Monitoring of revised scheme via hardship fund applications, etc
- Continue to make representations to the government regarding neighbouring variations and the national pensioner schemes

5. Financial Implications

Assessments and financial forecasts indicate that expenditure will fall by £242,000.

The evaluation of the proposed scheme changes considered the impact of changes to the CTR scheme on the rate of Council Tax collection and figures include an estimated Council Tax increase.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

All changes will be aligned with the statutory obligations as defined in the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (England) Regulations 2012.

Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 introduced a duty on every billing authority in England to make a scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of council tax payable, in respect of dwellings situated in its area, by:

- (a) Persons whom the authority considers to be in financial need, or
- (b) Persons in classes consisting of persons whom the authority considers to be, in general, in financial need.

The above scheme is referred to as the authority's council tax reduction scheme. Section 67 of the 1992 Act requires that revisions to the council tax reduction scheme are reserved to Full Council for a decision.

Schedule 1A sets out the requirements in relation to the adoption or revision of a scheme. Paragraph 2 confirms a scheme must state the classes of persons entitled to a reduction and that this may be by reference to income, capital, a combination of income and capital, number of dependents and whether an application has been made. Different reductions may be set for different classes. A reduction may be a discount calculated as a percentage, a set amount, expressed as an amount of council tax to be paid or the whole amount of council tax. The scheme must state the procedure by which a person may apply for a reduction and the procedure for appeal. The scheme must comply with prescribed matters set out by the Secretary of State in regulations. Paragraph 5 confirms that a billing authority must consider whether to revise its scheme or to replace it with another scheme for each financial year. Any revisions or replacement must be made no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement is to have effect. If any revision or replacement has the effect of reducing or removing a reduction to which any class of persons is entitled, the revision or replacement must include such transitional provision as the authority thinks fit. When making revisions to a scheme, paragraph 3 applies. Paragraph 3 requires an authority, before making a scheme, to (a) consult any major precepting authority which has the power to issue a precept to it, (b) publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and (c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Climate impact and detailed environmental implications will be fully assessed as part of the redesign process. These environmental considerations will also form a core part of any resulting support mechanism, such as the ethical debt collection service.

8. Risk Management

Several risks have been identified for the CTR Scheme redesign. There is a full risk register and monitoring process in place. Following a risk assessment, the highest-scoring inherent risks are:

Risk	Inherent risk score	Residual likelihood	Residual impact	Residual risk score	Mitigations
The redesign doesn't deliver the target level of financial savings.	High	2	4	High	Research and tests have been undertaken to validate and compare the North Somerset scheme with other LAs. Alternative savings will need to be identified and delivered.
Any delay to the tight timeline could result in missing	High	3	4	Medium	Clear planning and articulation of the implications of

the 1 April 2026 implementation.					missing key milestones
The impact on low-income households is considered too great.	High	3	3	Medium	Ensure the financial implications are understood and appropriate support mechanisms are enhanced to assist impacted residents.

9. Equality Implications

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? Yes

An equality impact assessment is considered to form a core part of the service requirements and delivery models; the EIA has been documented and shared as part of the design process.

10. Corporate Implications

Failure to deliver the range of MTFP budget reductions could result in the council being unable to deliver its statutory and essential corporate functions and risk North Somerset Council having to issue a section 114 notice.

11. Options Considered

Do not amend the scheme – this will not meet the council's commitment to review all areas of spending and implement mitigations to address its financial challenge.

In previous years, several changes to the CTR Scheme have been made to manage the level of financial support provided to low-income households.

Author:

Stuart Anstead, Head of Support Services stuart.anstead@n-somerset.gov.uk

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

Equality Impact Assessment:



CSD03 - Council Tax
Reduction Scheme - F

Consultation findings:



Council Tax
Reduction Scheme Co

Draft Council Tax Support Policy (awaiting on prescribed changes):



Full council - North
Somerset Draft CTR s

Hardship Fund Policy:



CTS Hardship Fund
Policy v0.1 202627.do

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DRAFT - Equality Impact Assessment 2026/27 Medium Term Financial Plan

Directorate Corporate Services
Budget Theme or Service Area: Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Lead Officer: Stuart Anstead
Review date: 12 February 2026

Please note this is a draft Equality Impact Assessment as the saving is subject to ongoing discussion and decision. The decision is linked to a number of other MTFP savings. If needed a revised EIA will be shared with Council at its meeting on 24 February 2026.

Page 97

Budget Ref.	Budget Proposal	Budget Reduction £		
		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
CSD03	Revisit and reduce the council tax reduction scheme	£242,000		£500,000

1. Equality Impacts

Please make High, Medium, Low or No bold as appropriate

1.1 Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

1.2 Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Assistant Director/Director sign off:

2. The Project

2.1 Background to project

The Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme helps 11,250 North Somerset households on low incomes to pay their Council Tax, of which approximately 6,400 are working age. Under the current scheme, a working-age household liable for Council Tax could get up to 75.5% of the charge automatically paid through the scheme, depending on their circumstances. (Working age is anyone under Pension Credit age).

The scheme costs approximately £12.5million per year and is based on the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (England) Regulations 2012.

Since 2012/13, local authorities have been permitted to determine a local scheme for reductions in council tax to replace the council tax benefit scheme. For more information on how the current scheme operates, please see [The Council Tax Reduction Schemes \(Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#). This scheme must be retained by all councils in respect of pensioner households (the “prescribed” scheme), whereas local authorities are free to determine an appropriate local scheme for working-age households.

It's proposed to review and redesign CTR, along with all areas of North Somerset Council's spending, as the council develops plans to balance its budget in 2026/27 and beyond.

The proposed changes will see the overall cost of the scheme fall from £12.5 million to £12.25 million, thus helping reduce the budget pressure.

As this scheme is designed to save £242,000 per annum against the current scheme costs, profiling shows that all households will lose a level of financial support under this scheme.

The CTR scheme and associated spending on working age claimants is discretionary and while most Local Authorities have a similar scheme, the design and levels of financial support vary nationally. The scheme in North Somerset is not

the most generous, but neither is it the least, with direct comparisons unreliable due to the scheme complexities and unique composition of households in the local area.

The CTR scheme is only one of a range of benefits available to individuals and households with a low income.

We are considering lowering the maximum support available from 75.5% to 67.5%. We will protect households with a disabled child with a minimum support level of 57% of the council tax bill.

This table shows the current 2025/26 scheme and the proposed 2026/27 scheme					
Band	Monthly earned income	Discount percentage 2025/26	Protected group * 2025/26	Discount percentage proposed 2026/27	Protected group * proposed 2026/27
1	£0	75.5%	75.5%	67.5%	67.5%
2	£0.01-£500.00	55%	65%	47%	57%
3	£500.01 - £800	42%	65%	34%	57%
4	£800.01 - £1,100	30%	65%	22%	57%
5	£1,100.01 - £1,400	18%	65%	10%	57%
6	£1,400.01 and above	0%	0%	0%	0%
* Households with a disabled children (the protected group) will receive a discount of up to 67.5%. This is dependent on levels of earnings and will not be below 57% for qualifying households					

If changes are agreed, funding will be set aside for a Discretionary Hardship Fund to assist households struggling to pay their Council Tax bills. It is estimated that 60% of the net impact from the 2025/26 CTR budget will be mitigated via this fund. This is in accordance with Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The fund will provide support for those in need. Engagement with CTR claimants will be undertaken to ensure that all appropriate steps to claim all applicable discounts and benefits have been taken.

North Somerset Council has considered the equality impacts on different protected or significant groups when applying the various calculations to the various benefit schemes (Housing Benefit or Universal Credit). The following scheme criteria are considered to support equality and therefore do not discriminate:

- The NSC scheme ignores all income other than earned income (wages).
- Therefore, in Universal Credit cases, if there is no earned income, a claimant is entitled to the maximum CTR. Same as if the claimant was previously in receipt of a legacy passported benefit.
- The scheme ignores all other income; any disability elements, etc, are ignored and not used to 'means test' /reduce entitlement.
- Our scheme isn't discriminatory as we consider earned income equally across all claimants.

2.2 Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers.

We understand that the changes this proposal would bring may affect Citizens Advice North Somerset (CANS). CANS is a voluntary organisation that, amongst other things, offers advice to customers who need support with their household income and expenditure, and a change to our CTR scheme could increase the number of customers needing this help and support.

Increased demand may be experienced by other support or welfare mechanisms such as foodbanks, fuel banks, and other welfare services.

These impacts will be mitigated through strengthened partnership working and financial support from the Crisis Resilience Fund.

Section 3 – What do we know?

3.1 Who is likely to be affected by this project?

Consider who the policy or service is intended to support. Please explain how proposed changes could impact on these groups. **Please make options below 'bold' as appropriate.**

Community across North Somerset	Community in a specific area, please specify	Council Partners

Service users	North Somerset Council Employees	Commissioned Services
Voluntary/Community Groups	Other – Those in receipt of CTS	

Any changes to the scheme will directly affect working-age households receiving CTR now or in the future.

We understand that the changes brought about by this proposal may impact Citizens Advice North Somerset, as a negative change to our CTR scheme could increase the number of customers requiring help and support.

There is an anticipated increase in demand for other support or welfare groups such as foodbanks, fuel banks, and other welfare services. This may extend to social care and mental health services, which are already experiencing significantly increased demand.

3.2 What data or evidence do you have to inform this Equality Impact Assessment?

Household Insight

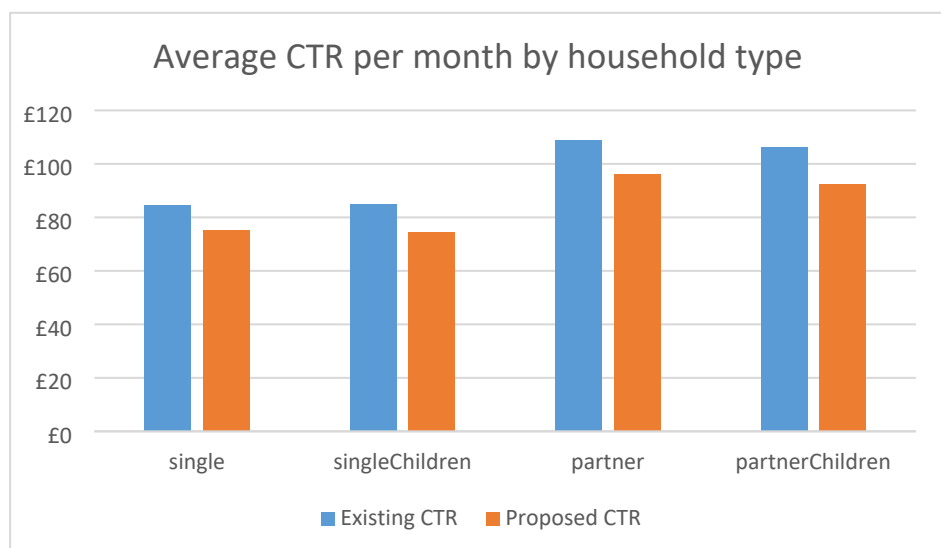
The proposed changes to the scheme would see 100% of customers with a decreased award.

Household Type	Current Scheme Average Award	Proposed Average Award	No. of residents	% of residents	No. retaining award	% retaining award	No. with decreased award	% with decreased award	Average decrease award
single	£84.65	75.21	3,293	53.78%	0	0.00%	3,293	100.00%	£9.44
couple	£108.88	96.08	388	6.34%	0	0.00%	388	100.00%	£12.80
family_1child	£85.87	75.35	1,014	16.56%	1	0.10%	1,013	99.90%	£10.53
family_2child	£90.83	79.73	1,428	23.32%	0	0.00%	1,428	100.00%	£11.10
total	£92.56	81.59	6,123	100.00%	1	0.02%	6,122	99.98%	£10.97

The table below shows the CTR discount (based on income bands) and the number of households that will be awarded that discount under the proposed scheme –

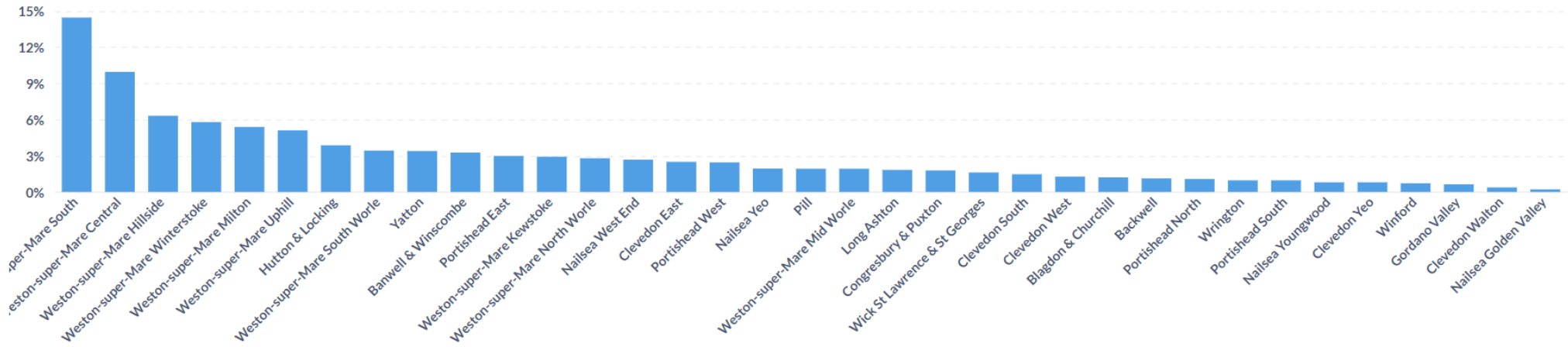
CTR discount band	Number residents	% residents	Single	Couple	Family 1child	Family 2child
68.00%	4,987	81.45%	2,944	310	727	1,006
Protected 57%	83	1.36%	0	0	21	62
47.00%	340	5.55%	127	28	71	114
34.00%	265	4.33%	86	18	75	86
22.00%	257	4.20%	86	15	66	90
10.00%	191	3.12%	50	17	54	70

The graph below shows the average CTR per month based on household type.

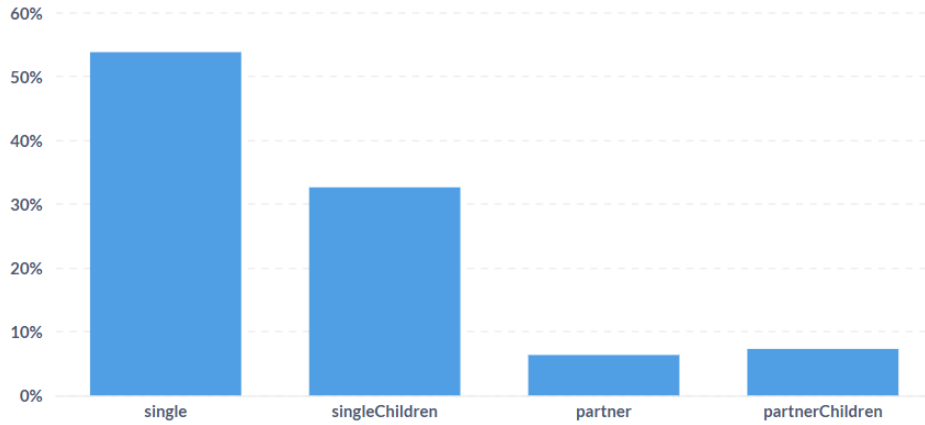


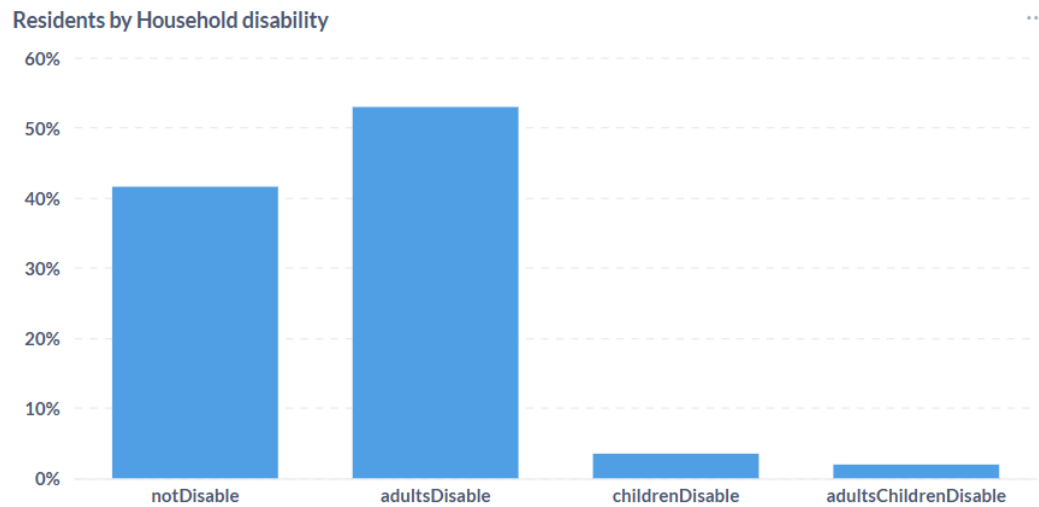
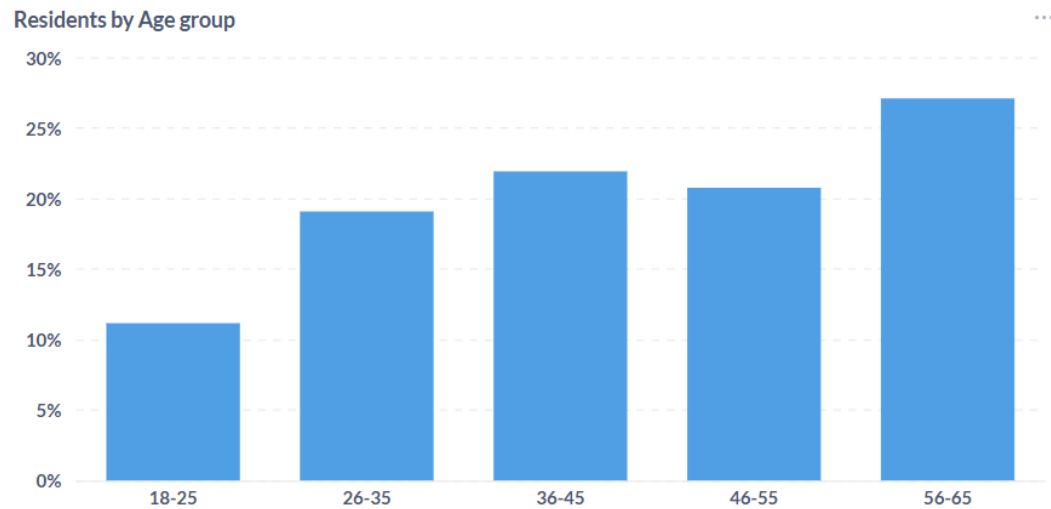
The charts below show the household insights of our current CTR customers

Residents by Ward



Residents by Household type





3.3 Who have you consulted with as a part of this project OR who do you plan to consult with?

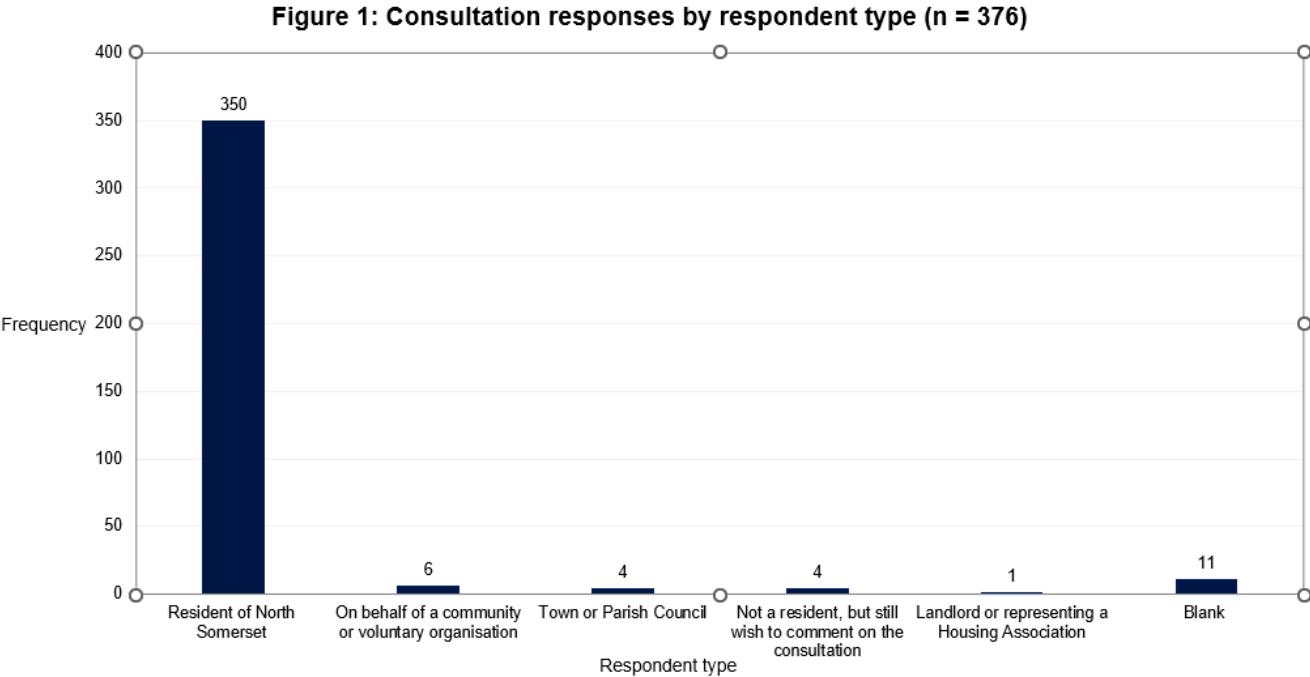
Members were briefed on the proposed changes to the scheme before the public consultation exercise commenced. Our public consultation was promoted on social media platforms and via a press release. Stakeholders, voluntary and community groups, Housing Associations, and Town & Parish councils received written notification of the consultation. Digitally excluded residents were targeted via posters referencing paper copies of the consultation document, which will be distributed via Libraries and the Healthy Living Centre.

Current CTR customers were contacted by email, due to the scale and potential cost of a physical letter.

Engagement has also taken place via the NSC stakeholder consultation event held on 12 December 2025, and the Equality Stakeholder Group on 12 January 2026.

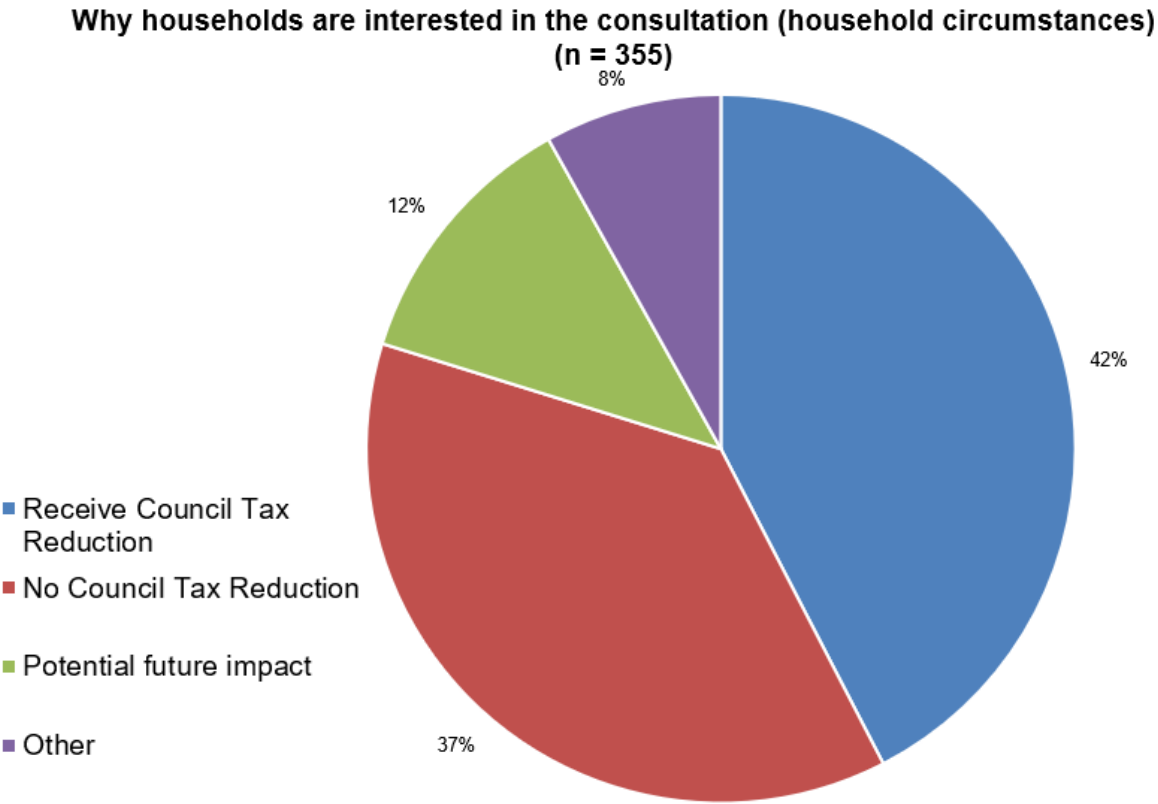
Public Consultation results

The majority of respondents took part in the consultation as residents of North Somerset, reflecting a strong level of local interest in the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme.



Respondents were asked to indicate why they were interested in the consultation, based on their household circumstances

This breakdown suggests that the consultation attracted engagement from both those directly affected by the proposal and those with a broader stake in how support is structured and delivered.



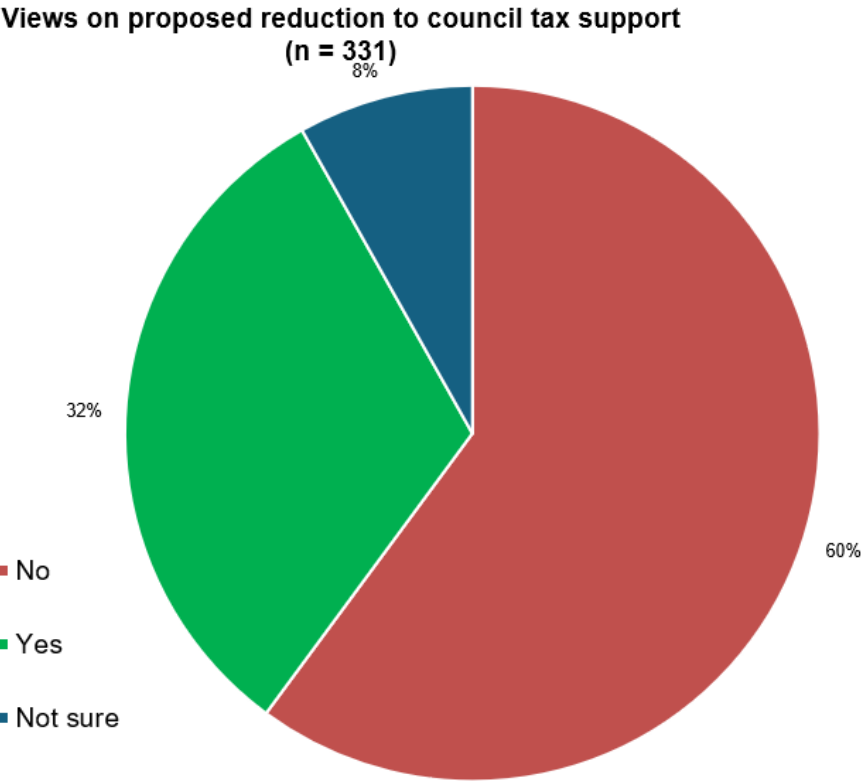
Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the proposal to reduce the level of help available through the Council Tax Reduction scheme.

Of those that answered yes, 76.19% weren't in receipt of CTR

Of those that answered no, 55.28% were in receipt of CTR

Of those that answered not sure, 29.63% were in receipt of CTR

Of those that answered not sure, % weren't in receipt of CTR



Summary of themes and their relative prevalence

The majority of respondents expressed concerns about the financial hardship the proposed changes would cause, particularly for low-income households, disabled individuals, and single-parent families. A significant number highlighted the additional costs associated with disability and the risk of increased poverty and debt. Several respondents suggested alternative approaches, such as a sliding scale of support or higher council tax for wealthier households, while others called for greater efficiency in council spending. A smaller number of respondents supported the proposal, citing the need to balance the council's budget and encourage financial independence. Neutral or mixed feedback was less common but included calls for fairness and shared responsibility in funding council services. Overall, the responses reflected a strong concern for the most vulnerable members of the community and a desire for the council to consider alternative ways to achieve its financial goals.

Equality Stakeholder Group

Stakeholders expressed strong and robust concern in relation to the impact of this proposal on the most vulnerable in North Somerset, in summary:

- Acknowledgement of very difficult and challenging decision for the council
- To only consider working income seems to be disincentivising employment.
- Voluntary organisations are seeing a considerable increase in those in working poverty. This proposal will increase the number of families in crisis.
- The physical and psychological impact of poverty is damaging.
- People who are most likely to be affected by this proposal are those most unlikely to respond to any consultation or apply for any hardship fund due to their abilities and capacity to engage.
- There will be a cumulative impact on those on a low income because of other increases in fees and charges.
- This proposal will have a high and direct impact on those who are relying most on our support, potentially leading to other strains on wider services such as social care. There should also be an acknowledgement of the impact on other services, such as the mental health service.
- Concerns that this saving could potentially exacerbate views and concerns about community cohesion. Pushing more people to become disenfranchised and seek alternative political opinions or sources of support.
- This proposal is different to all the others as it directly affects the amount of money people have, potentially pushing more people into poverty and desperation.

At the follow up session on 12 January 2026 the following comments were made:

- What are the costs of realising the savings? Increase in poverty likely to lead in an increase in need for debt recovery.
- How do we explore the inter connection between organisations such as CANS. What are the other opportunities to monitor indirect savings. Need to continue discussions with orgs such as CANS.
- Need to plan to monitor the actual impact of this proposal. Metrics to be identified to help improve understanding of wider impacts on those in receipt of this support.
- Concerns re not including disabled people in the exceptions and that only certain benefits are included in the calculations.

3.4 Are there any gaps in our evidence to support this Equality Impact Assessment? If so, what are the plans to gather this information?

The opinions of digitally excluded residents: Whilst we have directly contacted stakeholders, voluntary and community groups, and existing CTR customers electronically, we have promoted the consultation on social media channels, our access to any digitally excluded residents is reliant on the key message from our press release being printed in the press or posters and paper copies of the consultation being seen in Libraries and the Healthy Living Centre.

Information is not held on how CTR claimants protected groups such as sex (because CTR relates to whole household's circumstances), different ethnic groups, people who are LGBTQ+, particular faith groups, married or in a civil partnership, or are undergoing gender reassignment.

We do not hold data on ethnicity, so have not been able to consider these protected groups in detail.

Section 4 – Assessment of Impact

4.1 Will the project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) on any of these groups?

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.

H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None | + = Positive, - = Negative

Protected or significant group	Impact Level – before mitigating actions				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
Disabled people (including the consideration of neurodiversity)	X					X	53% of our CTR households have a disabled person in the household. A disabled person is someone in receipt of a disability benefit. We do not collect separate information on neurodiversity
People from different ethnic groups				X			We do not collect this information, and do not deem it relevant to this consultation
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)				X			CTR is a property based scheme and we do not have household makeup information
People who are LGBTQ+				X			We do not collect this information, and do not deem it relevant to this consultation
People on a low income	X					X	Our CTR scheme only helps households with a low income, and 100% of households will see a reduction in their award, at an average decrease value of £13.52 per month

Protected or significant group	Impact Level – before mitigating actions				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
People in particular age groups	X					X	Any changes will only impact those of working age (typically between 16 and 66). By law, the council cannot make any changes to the scheme that would reduce the level of support for pensioner households.
People in particular faith groups				X			We do not collect this information, and do not deem it relevant to this consultation
People who are married or in a civil partnership			X				We do not collect this information, however we do know that 834 of our CTR claimants are a couple (13.62% of all customers)
People who are undergoing gender reassignment				X			We do not collect this information, and do not deem it relevant to this consultation

Protected or significant group	Impact Level – before mitigating actions				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify: Parents of disabled children			X				We have 385 households that are a household with a disabled child in receipt of a disability benefit. These households are the protected group and will receive a minimum level of support of 57%

4.2 Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other budget savings?

Yes

Any reduction in the proposed or delivered CTR savings, if not delivered, will require the identification of alternative savings to ensure the council's budgets balance.

Due to the low income nature of CTR claimants, an anticipated drop in Council Tax collection rates (income revenue) is predicted (c. 80%), therefore an elevated level of reduction in the scheme is required to achieve a net £242,000.

If implemented, the potential impact may be increased pressure on Welfare Schemes and the Hardship Support Fund budgets. Services such as social care and mental health may incur higher costs that exceed the CTR scheme's savings.

Section 5 – Options

5.1 What other options have been considered?

Options more widely:

The council is considering a wide range of budget reductions but still has a shortfall for 2026/27. All options are designed to protect statutory/mandatory spending for local residents. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working-age recipients is classified as discretionary spend.

Options within the scheme redesign:

The council considered the following options to reduce the cost of the scheme:

- Lowering the maximum support to 55%
- Lowering the maximum support to 50%

To reduce the council's funding shortfall, the council has also looked at the following options:

- Increasing Council Tax: The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) assumes additional income from Council Tax generated from an increase in Council Tax. While councils are limited in how much they can raise Council Tax, North Somerset has applied for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). If the EFS is successful, the council will not apply the changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme, as this will be considered a double impact on low-income households.
- The current scheme, likely many benefits is based on 'earned income', the council is not suggesting a change to the calculation method for the revised Council Tax Reduction scheme.
- Cutting funding in other areas: Many council services are already financially stretched and may also need to make savings. Protecting the current CTR scheme would leave less money available for other services.
- Use of reserves: Reserves have been used, but this is not sustainable long-term.

Section 6 – Action Plan

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Impact on Voluntary/Community Groups	Data-driven proactive campaign to support advice and benefit maximisation to residents. We will continue to support CANS financially to enable the necessary advice and support to be provided to households.	Stuart Anstead	
Impact on CTR households impacted by changes	Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Fund: If changes are made, we will set aside funding for a Discretionary Hardship Fund to assist households struggling to	Stuart Anstead	

	pay their Council Tax bills. This is in accordance with Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The amount set aside will depend on the overall scheme. The fund will provide support for those in need, and applicants will need to provide evidence of their financial circumstances and demonstrate that all appropriate steps to claim all applicable discounts and benefits had been taken and ways to pay their Council Tax had been explored (including arranging to pay any debt with the council) Debt triage and benefits calculator tool: A campaign was launched in April 2025, to help residents access benefits they may not currently be claiming, reducing reliance on CTR and improving financial resilience. At the same time, we introduced an online debt triage and benefits calculator tool. There are plans to embed these tools in the North Somerset App to increase uptake and beneficial outcomes for households.		

	Assistance and promotion of these tools will be provided via partners such as Citizens Advice North Somerset and customer engagement staff in Libraries. FirstSteps: Direct resources to support impacted households. FirstSteps is the North Somerset Council's ethical debt management scheme. The team offers a non-judgmental and supportive service that is sensitive to individual circumstances, and they support residents by: • avoiding rising costs by providing immediate intervention • checking individuals are claiming all the benefits and support you're entitled to • let residents know about any schemes and organisations that could help • book appointments with Citizens Advice North Somerset • work with households to find a repayment plans that are affordable and adaptable if circumstances change		

6.1 If after planned actions you anticipate negative impacts to remain, please provide an explanation below.

We will set aside funding for a Discretionary Hardship Fund to assist households struggling to pay their Council Tax bills. However, this fund will not support households to the full extent of the proposed reduction. We anticipate that the hardship fund will provide one-third of the household losses

The benefits calculator tool could support CTR claimants to identify other unclaimed benefits to which they are entitled but its success will be dependent on household circumstances, the promotion and the uptake of this service.

6.2 What are the governance arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actions listed above and the actual impact on protected or significant groups as a result of this project

The new CTR scheme and the demands on mitigation measures, such as the Hardship fund, will be monitored to assess whether further changes are required to the Council Tax scheme for 2027/28.

6.3 Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with those effected?

If changes are made, we will communicate this to CTR customers via our webpage - [Council Tax reduction | North Somerset Council](#)

All CTR customers will also receive their annual Council Tax bill, which will show any changes to their entitlement and a leaflet detailing the changes.

6.4 How will you publish this Equality Impact Assessment?

The Equality Impact Assessment will be published as an appendix to the Full Council papers to support the decision scheduled for the meeting 24 February 2026.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation 2026-27: Summary of Responses

This report provides a summary of the feedback received during North Somerset Council's consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2026–2027.

Introduction

North Somerset Council carried out a public consultation between **26 November 2025 and 6 January 2026** to gather views on proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme. Like many local authorities, the Council continues to face significant financial pressures and must review both its spending and income to ensure that essential services can be sustained. One area under consideration is the CTR scheme, which provides financial support to low-income households to help them meet their council tax bills. This consultation sought feedback on a proposal that would change the level of support available from the 2026/27 financial year onwards.

North Somerset has a population of 216,700 (Census 2021)¹. Of these, around 6,400 working age residents currently receive support through the CTR scheme, with approximately 82.0% receiving the maximum level of help. Although the scheme supports a relatively small proportion of the overall population, it plays an important role in helping eligible households manage their council tax liability.

In 2024, the Council consulted on a series of changes to the CTR scheme, most of which have since been implemented. One proposal – reducing the maximum level of support the Council contributes towards a household's council tax bill - was not taken forward at that time.

During the consultation, we proposed reducing the maximum Council Tax Reduction from 75.5% to 65.5%, based on the financial assumptions at that time. Since then, the Council has agreed an 8.99% increase in council tax. Because this changes the overall funding position, the reduction in CTR support no longer needs to be as large as originally proposed.

¹ [Census and mid-year population estimates | North Somerset Council](#)

We propose that the reduction will now be 8% rather than 10%. This means the maximum support will reduce to 67.5%, not 65.5% as set out in the consultation.

For the 2026/27 financial year, the Council is considering reducing the maximum level of support available through the scheme. The proposal would lower this maximum to 67.5%, representing a 8% reduction across all levels of support. This means that every household receiving CTR -whether currently receiving the maximum or a lower percentage - would see a reduction in the amount of help they receive.

The impact of the proposal would vary depending on household circumstances. Residents who do not currently claim CTR would not see any immediate change, although any future entitlement would be based on the reduced level of support. Households already receiving CTR would see a reduction in their award, with the exact amount depending on their income band. Households with a disabled child would continue to receive prioritised support, with a guaranteed minimum reduction of 55% off their bill, although this too would represent a decrease compared with current arrangements.

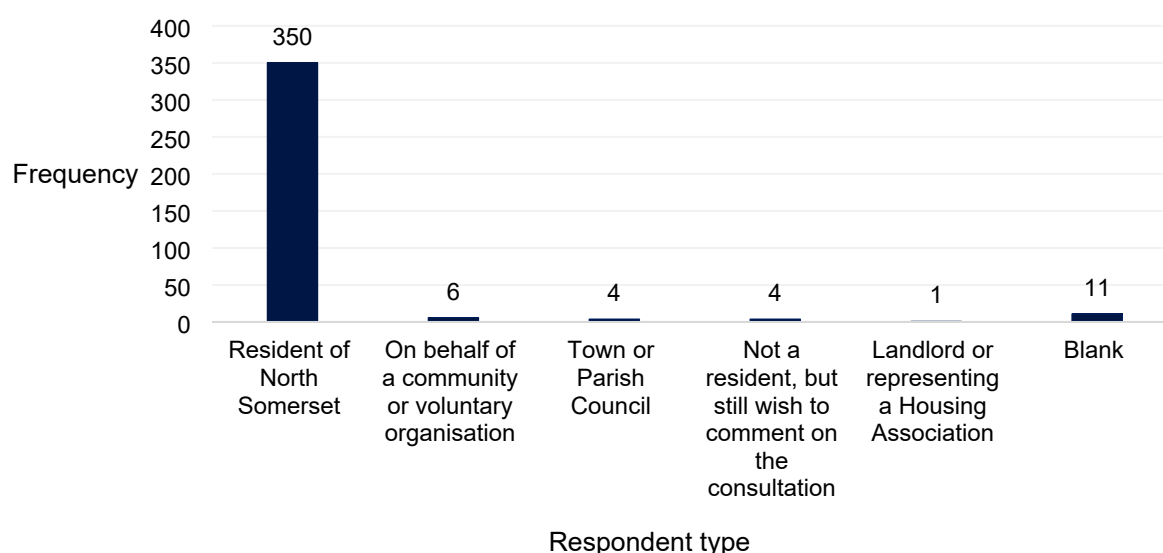
Councillors are expected to consider the consultation findings in February 2026 before deciding whether to implement the proposal. The feedback gathered through this consultation will form an important part of that decision-making process. Residents were invited to explain how the proposed change might affect them, their household, or the wider community, and to suggest ways the scheme could be made fairer or more workable for those who rely on it as well as for the wider population who depend on council services. If the proposal is approved, changes would take effect from April 2026.

Respondent profile

This section summarises who took part in the consultation. In total, **376 responses** were received via the council's consultation platform, e-Consult. Respondents were asked to indicate the capacity in which they were taking part, to help the Council understand the range of perspectives represented in the feedback.

The majority of respondents took part in the consultation as residents of North Somerset, reflecting a strong level of local interest in the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme. **Figure 1** breaks down the number of consultation responses by respondent type.

**Figure 1: Consultation responses by respondent type
(n = 376)**



Household circumstances and interest in the consultation

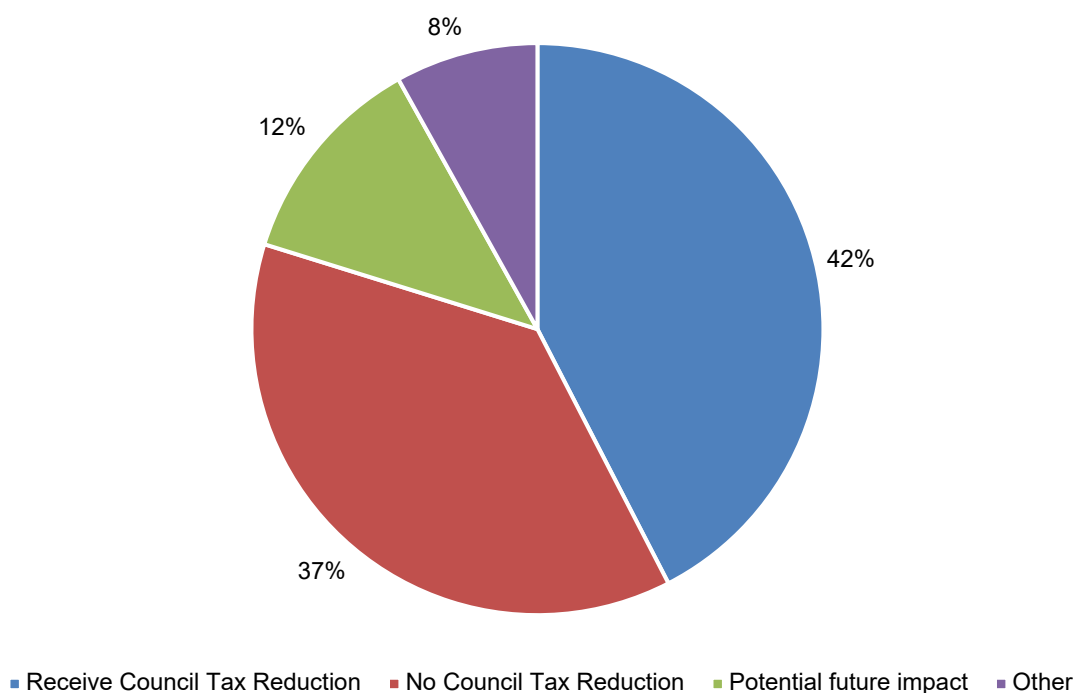
Respondents were asked to indicate why they were interested in the consultation, based on their household circumstances (see **Figure 2** for a breakdown). Of the 355 responses to this question, the largest proportion - 42% - came from households currently receiving Council Tax Reduction. These respondents were most likely to comment on the direct financial impact of the proposed changes and how a reduction in support might affect their ability to manage essential costs. A further 37% of respondents indicated that they do not currently receive Council Tax Reduction.

12% of respondents said they were interested in the consultation because they felt the proposed changes could affect them in the future.

The remaining 8% selected 'Other' as their reason for participating.

This breakdown suggests that the consultation attracted engagement from both those directly affected by the proposal and those with a broader stake in how support is structured and delivered.

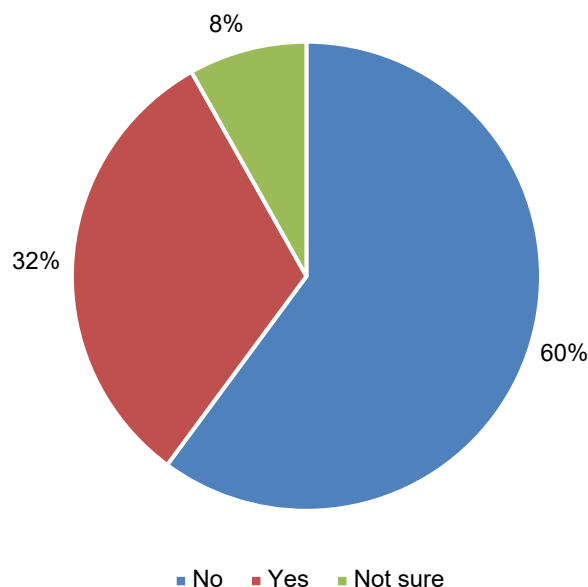
Figure 2: Why households are interested in the consultation (household circumstances) (n = 355)



Views on proposed reduction to council tax support

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the proposal to reduce the level of help available through the Council Tax Reduction scheme. **Figure 3** shows the breakdown. Of the 331 responses to the question, 60% of respondents stated they did not agree with the proposal to reduce the level of help. 32% of respondents did agree with reducing the level of help and 8% were unsure if they agreed or disagreed.

Figure 3: Views on proposed reduction to council tax support (n = 331)



Key findings

The most prevalent concern, raised by the majority of respondents, was the financial hardship that the proposed reduction in council tax support would cause for low-income households. Many respondents emphasised that they were already struggling to meet basic needs such as food, heating, and rent, and that any further reduction in support would exacerbate their difficulties. One respondent stated *“I already go without meals to ensure my children eat. Making my bills even higher would massively impact my family’s living”*. Another commented, *“This would push families into poverty, especially with the very fast repercussions for missing payments”*.

A number of respondents highlighted the impacts on households with disabled individuals. These respondents often referred to the additional costs associated with disability, such as specialist equipment, care needs and transport. One respondent noted, *“It is researched and evidence that the extraordinary cost of having a disabled child would simply impact further on already stretched finances”*. Another stated, *“As a disabled person, I cannot afford more council tax as it will push me into debt”*.

Some respondents also expressed concerns about the impact of the changes on single parent families, particularly those who are unable to work due to childcare or caring responsibilities. Several respondents described feeling ‘trapped’ in their circumstances,

with one parent explaining, *“I cannot work due to my children’s need. This isn’t because I don’t want to, but there is no workplace that can accommodate my situation”*.

Others noted that “The impact would significantly affect the welfare of single parent family’s who are already financially struggling to afford basic necessities”

Some respondents raised concerns about the knock-on effects of the proposed change, such as increased reliance on food banks, higher levels of debt, and greater demand for other council services, such as mental health support. One respondent said, *“Reducing support will tip people already struggling over the edge and increase levels of deprivation in the district”*. Others noted that the council might face higher costs in debt recovery as a result of increased arrears.

Around a quarter of respondents focused on the need for change. Within this group, some expressed concerns about what they perceived as inequities in the current system, suggesting that some recipients of Council Tax Support might not require the level of assistance they receive. These respondents often compared their own financial pressures as working households with what they viewed as limited incentives for others to work. One respondent stated, “There is no incentive for people to work. The higher bands are continually unfairly targeted.”

A recurring theme among supporters was the perception of fairness, with some arguing that all residents should contribute more equally to the cost of local services. One individual commented, “It doesn’t make sense to charge working families more so that other people don’t have to pay. If there isn’t enough money, then everyone should pay.” Another noted, “We all use the same services, so everyone should pay their fair share.”

A number of respondents saw the proposal as a necessary step to ensure the sustainability of wider services, which they argued benefit the majority of residents. One respondent commented, *“Given the pressures on the council budget, a measure such as this is unavoidable. It’s a measured and reasonable proposal.”* Others noted that *“everybody is feeling the pinch so the pain should be shared out equally,”* and that *“there is still higher support offered than in other areas.”*

Overall, while the number of respondents supporting the proposal was relatively small, their views reflected a mix of pragmatic acceptance, concerns about fairness, and a belief in shared responsibility. However, even among supporters, there was recognition of the potential challenges and the need for careful implementation to minimise harm to the most vulnerable residents.

A small number of respondents also raised concerns about the council’s financial management more broadly. These respondents cited examples of what they viewed as

unnecessary or ineffective spending, including the Clevedon seafront project and other schemes, and questioned why savings were being sought from residents rather than through efficiencies or alternative sources of income.

Suggestions for improvement or mitigation

Several respondents offered suggestions for mitigating the impact of the proposed changes. A recurring suggestion was to introduce a sliding scale of support based on household income, rather than applying a blanket reduction. One respondent proposed, “Link it so that richer people pay more according to household income, rather than the banding of the house as it’s not always the same thing.”

Others suggested increasing council tax for higher-income households or those in higher property bands to offset the need for reductions in CTR support. One respondent stated, “Why don’t you increase council tax in the highest band, charge the people with the most money more rather than taking away from those with the least?”

A few respondents recommended that the council focus on reducing wasteful spending or improving efficiency in other areas before cutting support for vulnerable residents. Specific examples included the Clevedon seafront project and perceived excessive salaries for council staff. One respondent commented, “Stop wasting money on vanity projects and leave the poor people who are suffering immense financial pressure alone.” Some respondents suggested that the council provide clearer information about the proposed changes and their potential impact, as well as ensuring that those affected are made aware of any additional support or hardship funds available.

Impacts on specific groups

The responses highlighted several groups that would be disproportionately affected by the proposed changes. Households with disabled individuals were frequently mentioned, with respondents emphasising the additional financial pressures they face. Single-parent families, particularly those with young children or caring responsibilities, were also identified as being at high risk of financial hardship.

Older residents, including pensioners and those with disabilities, expressed concerns about their fixed incomes and limited ability to absorb additional costs. Although the consultation clarified that pensioners would not be affected by any changes, one pensioner stated, “I am 80 next year and living alone. I simply couldn’t afford to pay an extra 10%.”

Respondents who are already in debt or struggling with variable incomes, such as those on Universal Credit, highlighted the challenges of managing fluctuating council tax bills.

Neutral or mixed feedback

A small number of respondents provided neutral or mixed feedback. Some acknowledged the financial pressures faced by the council and expressed understanding of the need to make savings. One respondent noted, “It’s unavoidable,

but given the pressures on the council budget, a measure such as this is reasonable.” Others suggested that the burden of funding council services should be shared more evenly across all residents, with one stating, “We all use the same services, so we should all pay our fair share.”

Many respondents expressed support for the proposed reduction, arguing that it would encourage greater financial responsibility among recipients of CTR. One respondent remarked, “People can become dependent on handouts. The objective should be to help people become self-sufficient.”

A few respondents suggested that changes to the 2 child cap will increase household income. One respondent noted, “With the child benefit cap being scrapped from April 2026 I think to support all of the community with the financial situation the council is in without the correct backing from central government, it is only fair we make savings when some families will now be better off with the benefit cap going”.

Summary of themes and their relative prevalence

The majority of respondents expressed concerns about the financial hardship the proposed changes would cause, particularly for low-income households, disabled individuals, and single-parent families. A significant number highlighted the additional costs associated with disability and the risk of increased poverty and debt. Several respondents suggested alternative approaches, such as a sliding scale of support or higher council tax for wealthier households, while others called for greater efficiency in council spending. A smaller number of respondents supported the proposal, citing the need to balance the council’s budget and encourage financial independence. Neutral or mixed feedback was less common but included calls for fairness and shared responsibility in funding council services. Overall, the responses reflected a strong concern for the most vulnerable members of the community and a desire for the council to consider alternative ways to achieve its financial goals.

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COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

2025-2026

[DRAFT VERSION]

Contents

(Use ctrl and click to link from the contents directly to the appropriate section of the document)

Introduction.....	5
Overview of the scheme	5
Pension-age applicants	5
Working-age applicants	6
Calculation of earnings – working-age applicants	7
Earnings from employment	7
Self-employment	7
Treatment of earnings for applicants receiving Universal Credit	8
Other income	8
Treatment of capital	8
Notional capital	9
Calculation of capital	9
Calculation of council tax reduction	10
Maximum council tax reduction	10
Where income is more than the amount for living expenses (pensioners only)	10
Other aspects of the calculation	10
Non-dependant deductions.....	11
Non-dependant deductions for pensioners	11
Non-dependant deductions for working-age applicants	12
Temporary Absences	12
Extended support - the run-on	13
People treated as not in Great Britain	14
Students.....	17
Effective dates	17
Date entitlement begins	17
Date from which changes in circumstances take effect	17
Application procedure /online applications	18
Date on which an application is made.....	20
Advance applications.....	21
Date applications are treated as made and backdating	21
Evidence and information	21
Duty to notify changes in circumstances	22
Decisions and awards	23
Use of information.....	23

Revisions, suspension, termination and written statements	24
Appeals	25
Discretionary awards	25
Electronic communication	25
Fraud and compliance [Some councils include a section like this on fraud and compliance. Do you want to include it?].	26
Annex 1 – Glossary of terms	28
Annex 2 - Polygamous marriages	35
Annex 3 – Treatment of income - pensioners	36
Earnings from employment	36
Self-employment	37
Other income	37
Childcare charges	37
Annex 4 - Definition of earnings as an employed earner	39
Annex 5 - Calculation of self-employed earnings	40
Annex 6 - Calculation of income other than earnings	41
Annex 7 - Income which is treated as capital (and capital treated as income)	41
Annex 8 - Students	42
Calculation of grant income	43
Calculation of student loans	44
Other issues	45
Appendix 1 - Living expenses (pensioners only)	47
Disabled child premium	48
Carer Premium	48
Enhanced disability premium	49
Severe disability premium	49
Appendix 2 - Alternative Maximum Council Tax Reduction (pensioners only)	50
Appendix 3 - Earnings that are ignored fully or in part (pensioners only)	51
Earnings paid before the first day of entitlement	51
Earnings paid when council tax reduction has been awarded	51
Appendix 4 - Income other than earnings that is ignored fully or in part (pensioners only)	53
Income wholly ignored – expenses:	53
Income wholly ignored – other:	53
Income partially ignored	55
Appendix 5 - Capital that is ignored	56
Property	56

Benefits.....	57
Compensation.....	58
Other	58

Introduction

1. Since April 2013, all council tax billing authorities in England are required to set up a scheme to help people in financial need pay their council tax. This document describes the scheme set up by North Somerset Council for the period 1st April 2025 until 31st March 2026.
2. The scheme is called a council tax reduction scheme because any support usually takes the form of a reduction in council tax liability, and therefore a reduction in the applicant's council tax bill.
3. Although this document provides a comprehensive account of the scheme in North Somerset, further information on those aspects which must be followed in all schemes can be found [here](#) in the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 (and subsequent amendments).
4. The provisions of this scheme apply to all applicants unless otherwise stated.

Overview of the scheme

Pension-age applicants

5. The Government has decided that pensioners¹ should have broadly the same level of support that they had in the old Council Tax Benefit scheme. This means that the Council must follow the rules decided by central Government and has no discretion to alter them.²
6. Subject to some overall conditions (see paragraph 12 below), there are three groups of pensioners in financial need who the scheme is designed to help:
 - those whose income is no greater than the set amount allowed for living expenses; these pensioners qualify for 100% reduction on their council tax bill;
 - those whose income is greater to a certain extent than the set amount allowed for living expenses; these pensioners will have 20% of the difference between their income and the amount for living expenses deducted from the maximum amount of council tax reduction that would otherwise be payable;
 - those where there is a second adult sharing the household who would normally be expected to contribute towards the council tax bill, but who cannot afford to do so; these pensioners will see a reduction in their council tax bill of either 7.5%, 15%, 25% or 100%, depending on the circumstances of the second adult living in the household (see [Appendix 2](#)).

¹ See [Annex 1](#) (Glossary) for definitions of 'pensioner' and 'working age'. A pensioner is person who has reached the qualifying age for State Pension Credit and is not (or where there is a partner the partner is not) receiving a working-age income-related benefit.

² Set out in the [Council Tax Reduction Schemes \(Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) (as amended from 2013 to 2023).

7. In the calculation of council tax reduction for pensioners, there is an amount allowed for living expenses which is made up of the following components:
 - an amount for the applicant or, if they are a member of a couple, an amount for both of them;
 - if appropriate, an amount for children³ or young persons who are members of the applicant's family;⁴
 - if appropriate, additional amounts, or premiums, as set out in [Appendix 1](#), for example to cover expenses associated with disability.
8. There are special arrangements for polygamous marriages (see [Annex 2](#)).

Working-age applicants

9. The Council has devised its own scheme for working-age applicants. Subject to some overall conditions (see paragraph 12 below), the working-age applicants in financial need who the scheme is designed to help are those whose monthly earnings are within any earnings band prescribed by the Council as set out in the table below.

Band	Monthly earned income	Discount percentage
1	£0 - £499.99	75.5%
2	£500 - £799.99	55%
3	£800 - £1099.99	42%
4	£1100 - £1,399.99	30%
5	£1,400 - £1,699.99	18%
6	£1,700 and above	0%

10. The weekly earnings to be applied are based on the earnings of the applicant and, where appropriate, their partner. The percentage amount of reduction awarded depends on where the applicant's earnings fall in the ranges listed in the table. The net weekly earnings of those applicants who do not receive Universal Credit are calculated in accordance with [paragraphs 14-19](#) of this scheme. For applicants receiving Universal Credit, the amount of earnings determined by DWP in the assessment of Universal Credit is used in the calculation, in accordance with [paragraphs 20-22](#) of this scheme.

³ An applicant is treated as responsible for a child or young person who is normally living with them. Where a child or young person spends broadly equal amounts of time in two separate households, or if there is a question as to which household a child or young person lives in, the person who receives Child Benefit (or who has applied for Child Benefit) in respect of that child or young person is treated as responsible. In the absence of a Child Benefit claim, the person who has primary responsibility is treated as responsible. For the purposes of this scheme, only one person can be responsible for a child or young person in any one council tax reduction week.

⁴ The number of children or young persons included in the calculation for pensioners is limited to two from 1st April 2018, subject to transitional protection. This follows the Prescribed Requirements Regulations.

11. In addition, households where there is a disabled child (or children) receive a discount of 75.5%.
12. The overall conditions for all applicants to receive financial assistance from the scheme are that they:
 - live in the property as their main home; and
 - are liable to pay council tax; and
 - meet the residence rules; and
 - have capital not exceeding £16,000 (£6,000 for working-age applicants); and
 - have made an application for assistance from the scheme.

Calculation of earnings – working-age applicants

(Paragraphs 14-19 apply to working-age applicants not receiving Universal Credit)

13. The earnings of an applicant's partner are treated as belonging to the applicant.

Earnings from employment

14. In the calculation of council tax reduction, an applicant's net earnings are taken into account, after deductions have been made from their gross earnings for: income Tax, class 1 National Insurance contributions, and 50% of contributions to occupational or personal pension schemes.
15. Where a working-age applicant not receiving Universal Credit has earnings from employment, the weekly amount of earnings is calculated using an average that the Council considers to be a fair representation of the applicant's contractual income, covering a period of no more than 52 weeks (not including earnings received from more than one financial tax year).
16. Earnings are taken into account from the date of application even if they were not received during the week of application. Where an applicant begins remunerative work after an application for council tax reduction has been made, earnings are taken into account from the first reduction week after they began work, even if they were not actually received in that week. Similar arrangements are made when earnings change.

17. See [Annex 4](#) for the definition of earnings as an employed earner.

Self-employment

18. An applicant for council tax reduction is treated as self-employed if they are gainfully employed but not as an employed earner.
19. Where an applicant is self-employed, weekly earnings are estimated over a reasonable period but no more than over 52 weeks. See [Annex 5](#) for a description of how self-employed earnings are calculated.

Treatment of earnings for applicants receiving Universal Credit

20. For applicants receiving Universal Credit, the scheme uses the assessment of earnings in the Universal Credit claim⁵, which is provided to the Council by the Department for Work and Pensions. However, if the Council considers that the assessment of earnings provided by DWP is inaccurate, for example because of fraud, the Council may substitute its own figure.
21. The amount of earnings which relates to the relevant Universal Credit assessment period⁶ is taken into account. If an applicant ceases to be entitled to Universal Credit because of an increase in their earnings, the amount of earnings used in the current Universal Credit assessment period is taken into account until evidence of the new level of earnings is received by the Council.
22. Monthly figures are converted to weekly figures by multiplying by 12 and dividing by 52.

Other income

23. Income other than earnings (including Universal Credit) is ignored in the calculation of council tax reduction for working-age applicants – the reduction to be applied is based entirely on earnings. For pensioners, most income is taken into account unless specified. See [Annex 3](#).
24. If it appears to the Council that an applicant has come to an arrangement with a non-dependant member of the household specifically to take advantage of the council tax reduction scheme, where the income and capital of the non-dependant exceeds that of the applicant, the income and capital of the non-dependant is treated as if it were the applicant's, and the applicant's income is ignored.

Treatment of capital

(Paragraphs 25-32 apply to pensioners and working-age applicants not receiving Universal Credit)

25. The figure for capital used in the assessment of Universal Credit may also be used for the calculation of council tax reduction, but the Council will use its own figure where it considers it more appropriate to do so.
26. If an applicant has more than £16,000 (£6,000 for working-age applicants) in capital, no council tax reduction is payable under this scheme.

⁵ The calculation of income and capital in Universal Credit is set out in Part 6 of the [Universal Credit Regulations 2013](#).

⁶ The assessment period is a monthly period which starts on the day a person makes a claim for Universal Credit. Payment of Universal Credit is usually made a week after the end of each assessment period.

27. All capital is taken into account in the calculation of the award, including income treated as capital, unless it is listed in [Appendix 6](#) in which case it is ignored. The capital of a child or young person who is a member of the applicant's family is also ignored. The capital of an applicant's partner is treated as if it belonged to the applicant.
28. Certain types of income are treated as capital (and vice versa). See [Annex 7](#) for a full list.

Notional capital

29. If an applicant deliberately disposes of capital in order to obtain council tax reduction, it is assumed that the applicant still possesses that capital, and it is therefore taken into account. This notional capital is reduced over time⁷ by the amount that the applicant would have received in council tax reduction if they had not been treated as having that capital. With certain exceptions, where an applicant fails to realise capital which they own, that capital is also taken into account. Most payments of capital made to a third party on behalf of the applicant are taken into account.⁸

Calculation of capital

30. Capital which an applicant possesses in the United Kingdom is calculated at its current market or surrender value less:
- 10% if there are expenses attributable to its sale, and
 - the amount of any monetary claim secured against it.
31. Capital which an applicant possesses outside the United Kingdom is treated in the same way except that it is calculated:
- at its current market or surrender value in that country if it can be transferred to the United Kingdom; or
 - if it cannot be transferred to the United Kingdom, at a price which it would realise if it were sold in the United Kingdom to a willing buyer, less:
 - 10% for sales costs, if appropriate, and
 - the amount any monetary claim secured against it.
32. Where an applicant owns capital jointly with one or more persons, each share is treated as equal unless there is evidence to the contrary.
33. Where a pensioner applicant has capital exceeding £10,000, income of £1 is assumed for every complete £500 up to a maximum of £16,000. In making this calculation, if

⁷ The Council will make calculations every thirteen weeks.

⁸ See paragraphs 34 and 35 of Schedule 1 to the Council tax reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012.

the final part of the excess is not a complete £500, an income of £1 is nevertheless taken into account.

Calculation of council tax reduction

Maximum council tax reduction

34. Council tax is calculated on a daily basis. For any day for which a pensioner applicant is liable to pay council Tax, the maximum amount of council tax reduction is 100% of the amount of council tax set by the council for the applicant's dwelling, less any appropriate discount, divided by the number of days in that financial year. For any day for which a working-age applicant is liable to pay council tax, the maximum amount of council tax reduction is [75.5%], reducing as earnings increase in accordance with the table at paragraph 9.

Where income is more than the amount for living expenses (pensioners only)

35. Where a pensioner applicant's income is greater than the amount allowed for living expenses in their case, council tax reduction is withdrawn gradually (sometimes known as the taper) as income increases, until entitlement is extinguished altogether.⁹ This avoids a cliff-edge effect of suddenly ending all support as soon as income becomes greater than the amount for living expenses.
36. For example, if an applicant's weekly maximum council tax reduction is £15, and the amount for living expenses in their case is £100 a week, they are entitled to maximum support of £15 providing their income is not greater than £100. If their income increases to £120, a sum equal to 20% of the difference between their income (£120) and the amount for living Expenses (£100) is deducted (20% of £20 = £4) from their maximum council tax reduction, so they receive £15 less £4 = £11 a week. If their income increases further to £180, the amount deducted from their maximum council tax reduction is £16 (20% of £80 is £16) and there is, therefore, no entitlement to council tax reduction because £16 is greater than the maximum of £15.

Other aspects of the calculation

37. In calculating the amount of council tax reduction, fractions of less than half a penny are rounded down and fractions of half a penny or more are rounded up.
38. Where an applicant is jointly liable for council tax with other residents at the same dwelling, the council tax set by the authority (less any discount) is divided by the number of people jointly liable and the applicant's council tax reduction is based on

⁹ See paragraph 6 above. Council tax reduction is withdrawn at the rate of 20% of the difference between an applicant's income and the amount allowed for living expenses.

their share. This does not apply in the case of a student where they are excluded from entitlement to council tax reduction, or a partner of the applicant.

Non-dependant deductions

39. A non-dependant is a person living as a member of the applicant's household who is not their partner or a child/young person for whom they are responsible. There are certain exceptions such as joint-occupiers, boarders and paid carers, who are not treated as non-dependants. Non-dependants aged 18 or over are usually expected to contribute to household expenses such as council tax.
40. In the case of non-dependant couples only one deduction is made, but all their gross income is taken into account.
41. Where there is joint liability for council tax in a household, other than joint liability between an applicant and their spouse or civil partner, and there is a non-dependant who is a non-dependant of two or more of the liable persons, the deduction is divided equally between the liable persons. If the non-dependant is a non-dependant of one liable person, the full rate of the deduction is applied solely to that liable person.
42. No non-dependant deductions are applied if the applicant or their partner:
 - is blind;
 - is receiving Attendance Allowance, the care component of Disability Living Allowance, the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment, or an Armed Forces Independence Payment, including where these benefits and payments are temporarily suspended, for example through hospitalisation.

Non-dependant deductions for pensioners

43. For pensioners, the weekly deduction for a non-dependant aged 18 or over in work is normally £15.10 and for a non-dependant aged 18 or over not in work, £4.90. However, where the applicant can demonstrate that a non-dependant in work has relatively low gross weekly earnings, the deduction is as follows:
 - less than £256.00, the deduction is £4.90.
 - not less than £256.00, but less than £445.00, the deduction is £10.05.
 - not less than £445.00, but less than £554.00, the deduction is £12.60.
44. No non-dependant deductions are applied where the non-dependant:
 - normally lives elsewhere;
 - is receiving a training allowance paid as part of a youth training scheme;
 - is a full-time student;
 - has been a hospital in-patient for more than 52 weeks;
 - is not living with the applicant because they are a member of the armed forces away on operations;

- is receiving a payment for a disability caused by the Thalidomide drug;
 - is receiving Income Support, State Pension Credit, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
 - is entitled to an award of Universal Credit where the award is calculated on the basis that the non-dependant does not have any earned income;
 - is a person disregarded for the purposes of council tax discount.
45. In calculating a non-dependant's income, the following are ignored:
- Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Child Disability Payment, Personal Independence Payment, Adult Disability Payment or Armed Forces Independence Payment;
 - payments made under certain specified trust funds and compensation schemes¹⁰ including analogous payments.

Non-dependant deductions for working-age applicants

46. For working-age applicants, a standard deduction is applied for non-dependants aged 18 or over. The deduction is £7.50 a week for those who are receiving a working age income-related benefit and have no earnings, and £15.00 week for those who are working.
47. No non-dependant deductions are applied where the non-dependant:
- normally lives elsewhere;
 - is receiving a training allowance paid as part of a youth training scheme;
 - has been a hospital in-patient for more than 52 weeks;
 - is not living with the applicant because they are a member of the armed forces away on operations;
 - is receiving a payment for a disability caused by the Thalidomide drug.

(Paragraphs 48 to 116 of this scheme generally apply to all applicants)

Temporary Absences

48. An applicant can be regarded as living in their home and therefore eligible for council tax reduction even if they are temporarily absent for certain periods. Council tax reduction is payable during periods of temporary absence if the applicant:
- is liable for council tax and the address they are temporarily absent from is their sole or main residence;
 - intends to return to live in their home;
 - is not letting or sub-letting that part of the home that they normally occupy;
 - is unlikely to be away for more than the time allowed (see below).

¹⁰ See paragraph 8(10) of schedule 1 to Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 for a full list of trust funds and compensation schemes.

49. In calculating the period of absence, the first day of absence is included and the day of return is excluded.
50. With one exception (see paragraph 51), a period of absence from home must not be (or must not be expected to be) more than 13 weeks. However, this is extended to 52 weeks where the applicant is:
- a remand prisoner awaiting trial or sentence;
 - living in a bail or probation hostel, or bailed to live away from home;
 - a hospital patient (or similar medical institution);
 - receiving (or whose partner or child is receiving) medically approved treatment or care, in accommodation other than residential accommodation;
 - providing medically approved care to someone else, or caring for a child under 16 whose parent or guardian is away from home because they are receiving medically approved care;
 - absent because of fear of violence in the home or domestic abuse;
 - on an approved training course;
 - a student who is eligible for council tax reduction and they have to study abroad as part of their course;
 - in a residential care home, other than on a trial basis.
51. A period of absence from home outside Great Britain must not be (or must not be expected to be) more than 4 weeks.¹¹ However, if the applicant is absent from Great Britain because of the death of a close relative and it is unreasonable for them to return within the first 4 weeks, the Council may decide that council tax reduction can be paid for up to 8 weeks.
52. The 4-week period can also be extended to 26 weeks where the applicant is:
- a member of the armed forces on operations overseas;
 - receiving medical treatment in hospital;
 - absent because of fear of violence in the home or domestic abuse;
 - undergoing (or their partner or dependent child is undergoing) medical treatment or medically approved convalescent care in accommodation other than residential accommodation;
 - a mariner or continental-shelf worker.

Extended support - the run-on

53. Extended council tax reduction (sometimes known as the run-on) can be awarded to working-age people who have been (or their partners have been) receiving Income

¹¹ In the case of absences outside Great Britain, the period of temporary absence for pensioners was reduced from 13 weeks to 4 weeks by the [Council Tax Reduction Schemes \(Prescribed Requirements\) England \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#). The Council has decided to apply this policy change to working-age applicants.

Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment Support Allowance for at least 26 weeks, and who come off that benefit because they or their partners start employment as an employed or self-employed earner, or increase their hours or earnings, where that employment is expected to last 5 weeks or more. This also applies to those, including pensioners, who were receiving certain contributory benefits which end for the same reason. The qualifying contributory benefits are Incapacity Benefit, contributory Employment and Support Allowance, and Severe Disability Allowance. The qualifying rules are broadly the same as for those coming off income-related benefits.

54. Extended support can be made for up to 4 weeks starting from the beginning of the week after entitlement to a qualifying benefit ends. Support lasts for 4 weeks unless the applicant's liability for council tax ends first.
55. The amount of the extended payment is usually the amount that the applicant was entitled to during the last week that they were receiving a qualifying benefit. However, if for any reason entitlement to council tax reduction after the change of circumstances is higher, the higher amount is paid.
56. Where an applicant who is entitled to extended support moves from one local authority to another, extended support may take the form of a payment from one local authority to the other, or directly to the applicant. The amount of extended payment remains the same, that is, the amount payable in respect of the last week before entitlement to a qualifying benefit ceased. Where an applicant continues to be liable for council tax, the second authority must reduce the new amount of council tax reduction by the amount of the extended support already awarded.
57. Entitlement to council tax reduction does not end until the end of the extended support period, even if entitlement would otherwise have ended based on the applicant's new circumstances. The general rules for calculating changes of circumstances do not apply.
58. In order to ease the transition to retirement, an applicant will continue to receive a council tax reduction for a period of 4 weeks from the day after a claim for a working-age income-related benefit has ceased because they have reached the qualifying age for State Pension Credit, or for four weeks after their partner has claimed State Pension Credit.

People treated as not in Great Britain

59. Council tax reduction is payable only to those applicants who live in Great Britain and, in some circumstances, people are treated as if they are not in Great Britain and are therefore excluded from the scheme. This applies where they do not satisfy the habitual residence test and where they are subject to immigration control.

60. The habitual residence test is in two parts: first, an applicant must show that they are habitually resident (intend to settle and make their home in the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, or the Republic of Ireland). Secondly, EEA nationals (people from EU countries together with Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) must have a legal right to live in the UK and claim benefits, i.e. a 'right to reside' in the UK (known as the residence rules). These rules are satisfied if the applicant is, for example:
- a worker or is self-employed in accordance with the EEA regulations;¹²
 - a family member of such a worker or self-employed person;
 - a worker who has ceased activity, for example because of retirement or incapacity, or a family member of such a worker;
 - a family member of a deceased worker;
 - a refugee;
 - is receiving Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit (but this does not apply if a new applicant is receiving income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and their right to reside was decided only on the basis that they were a jobseeker or the family member of a jobseeker).
61. However, there are some circumstances in which EEA nationals have been granted leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom but who do not satisfy the habitual residence test for the purposes of applying for council tax reduction. An EEA national who is a jobseeker is not treated as having the right to reside for the purposes of applying for council tax reduction simply by being a jobseeker. With some exceptions in respect of Northern Ireland, EEA nationals who are granted leave to enter, or remain in, the United Kingdom solely as a result of satisfying the special immigration rules that allowed EEA citizens to remain in the UK after the withdrawal from the EU (the settlement scheme), do not satisfy the habitual residence test simply because of these provisions.¹³
62. British citizens returning to the UK after a period of living or working abroad have an automatic right to reside in the UK, but they do need to show that they are habitually resident in the UK.
63. An applicant who has entered the UK from Afghanistan is treated as habitually resident in the UK if they:

¹² [The Immigration \(European Economic Area\) Regulations 2016](#). These regulations were repealed in 2020 but some provisions, including definitions, were retained under the [Citizens' Rights \(Application Deadline and Temporary Protection\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2020](#).

¹³ See regulation 12 of the Council Tax Reduction (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012, paragraphs 4, 4A and 4B, for a full list of circumstances where an applicant has been given leave to enter or remain in the UK but who does not satisfy the habitual residence test.

- have been granted leave to remain in accordance with the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme or the previous scheme for locally employed staff in Afghanistan; or
 - left Afghanistan in connection with the collapse of the Afghan government that took place on 15 August 2021.
64. An applicant who has entered the UK from Ukraine is treated as habitually resident in the UK if they:
- were living in Ukraine immediately before the 1st January 2022 and left Ukraine in connection with the Russian invasion which took place on 24th February 2022; and
 - have been granted leave to enter or remain in accordance with the immigration rules; or
 - have a right of abode in the United Kingdom because they are British or in some cases Commonwealth citizens, or do not require leave to enter or remain because they are Irish citizens.¹⁴
65. An applicant who has entered the UK from Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights or Lebanon is treated as habitually resident if they:
- were living in any of the above areas immediately before 7th October 2023 and left those areas in connection with the Hamas terrorist attack in Israel on 7th October 2023 or the escalating violence in the region following the attack;
 - have been granted leave to enter or remain in accordance with the immigration rules; or
 - have a right of abode in the United Kingdom because they are British or in some cases Commonwealth citizens, or do not require leave to enter or remain because they are Irish citizens.
66. An applicant who has entered the UK from Sudan is treated as habitually resident if they:
- were living in Sudan before 15th April 2023 and left in connection with the violence on 15th April 2023 in Khartoum, and across Sudan;
 - have been granted leave to enter or remain in accordance with the immigration rules; or
 - have a right of abode in the United Kingdom because they are British or in some cases Commonwealth citizens, or do not require leave to enter or remain because they are Irish citizens.
67. An applicant is also treated as habitually resident if they have been granted, or are deemed to have been granted, leave outside the rules made under section 3(2) of the [Immigration Act 1971](#).

¹⁴ As defined in sections 2 and 3ZA of the [Immigration Act 1971](#).

68. Non-EEA and non-UK nationals may be subject to immigration control and an applicant who is subject to immigration control is excluded from applying for council tax reduction. For example, this applies where an applicant:
- needs permission to enter or remain in the UK but does not yet have permission;
 - has permission to enter or remain in the UK, but only if they do not claim benefits or use other public services;
 - has been given permission to enter or remain in the UK because someone formally agreed to support them.

Students

69. A property that is wholly occupied by full-time students, for example a hall of residence, is exempt from council tax. Most students are not eligible for council tax reduction but some students who are liable for council tax can get support in specified circumstances. See [Annex 8](#) for a full account.

Effective dates

Date entitlement begins

70. An applicant's entitlement to council tax reduction normally begins from the start of the reduction week (Monday to Sunday) which follows the date of application.¹⁵ However, if an applicant becomes liable for council tax for the first time¹⁶ in respect of a property in which they reside, and they are entitled to council tax reduction, their entitlement begins from the first day that they are legally liable to pay council tax, providing they apply within a month of that reduction week.
71. Where, following the death of a partner who was receiving council tax reduction until the date of death, an applicant or their partner (or a non-dependant who was living in the deceased applicant's household) applies for council tax reduction within three months from the date of the applicant's death, entitlement begins from the date of death.

Date from which changes in circumstances take effect

72. Changes in circumstances take effect from the Monday following the date of change, apart from these exceptions:
- changes in an applicant's income arising from legislative changes affecting rates of income tax, personal tax reliefs, National Insurance contributions, and tax credit rates are ignored for a period of up to 30 weeks;

¹⁵ See [paragraph 79](#) for a definition of when an application is treated as made in the case of applicants receiving Universal Credit.

¹⁶ including those liable to pay council tax for the first time in their home, for example after an exemption ends, as well as those who move into a property where they become liable to pay council tax.

- where entitlement to a benefit ceases, but excluding Universal Credit, the change takes effect from the first day of the reduction week following the day immediately after the benefit ceases;
 - in the case of applicants receiving Universal Credit, where entitlement to Universal Credit either starts or ceases, or where there is a change in the Universal Credit award, the change takes effect from the Monday following the start of the Universal Credit assessment period¹⁷ in which the change takes place;
 - a change in the amount of council tax payable takes effect from the date of change;
 - a change in the amount a person is liable to pay by way of council tax (for example changes to a discount) also takes effect from the date of change;
 - if the change applies to an applicant who now has a partner, or a partner has died, or they have separated, it takes effect from the date of the change;
 - backdated payments of income are generally taken into account over an appropriate period as if they had been paid on time.
73. Where a non-dependant joins a pensioner household, or where the non-dependant's earnings increase, the change to that pensioner's council tax reduction takes effect 26 weeks after the date on which the change took place.
74. Where an applicant receives an increase in State Pension Credit and, as a result, their award of council tax reduction increases, the change usually takes effect from the week the amount of State Pension Credit alters. However, where an award of council tax reduction decreases, the change either takes effect from the week the authority is notified of the change in State Pension Credit or the date on which State Pension Credit changes if this later.
75. Where two or more changes occur in the same week, and at least one of which is treated as taking effect from the date of change in accordance with paragraph 79, all the changes are deemed to take effect from the date of change (or the earliest date of change where two or more changes satisfy paragraph 72).

Application procedure /online applications

76. Only one partner in a couple (or a polygamous marriage) can apply for council tax reduction in respect of the same dwelling. If the partners cannot agree who should apply, the Council will decide for them.
77. Where a person who is liable to pay council tax is unable to act for themselves, and someone has been appointed to act on their behalf (for example an attorney), the

¹⁷ The assessment period is a monthly period which starts on the day a person makes a claim for Universal Credit. Payment of Universal Credit is usually made a week after the end of each assessment period.

person appointed can make an application on behalf of that person. Where there is no-one to act on the person's behalf, the Council may appoint someone to act. An appointee must be aged over 18 and must apply for the appointment in writing or online. The Council may accept as an appointee someone who has already been appointed by the Department for Work and Pensions to act in respect of a social security benefit. The Council has the power to revoke the appointment at any time and the appointee may resign on giving 4 weeks' notice. If, subsequently, another person is authorised to act on the applicant's behalf (for example, an attorney) the former appointeeship ceases. The appointee must take full responsibility for all aspects of the application and is made fully aware by the Council of the duties involved, including the consequences of failing to comply with those duties.

78. An application may be made:
- in writing; or
 - online; or
 - by telephone, although the applicant will subsequently need to provide a signed statement and any other documentation necessary to support the application.

If an applicant has difficulty in completing a written form, the Council can make alternative arrangements to assist.

79. Where the Department for Work and Pensions notifies the Council that an award of Universal Credit has been made for the first time following a Universal Credit claim, the Council automatically treats this notification as an application for council tax reduction. In certain circumstances, for example where a Universal Credit notification does not include details of housing costs or details of other adults in the property are not included, it may be necessary for the applicant to provide further information to the Council. Any such information must be provided within one month (or such longer period as the Council considers reasonable) of being asked to do so.
80. An application made in writing must be made to the Council office on a form provided by the Council free of charge. Where an application is made on the correct form but is not properly completed, the Council may ask the applicant to complete the form correctly. Where an application is made in writing but not on the correct form, the Council may either supply the applicant with the correct form or ask for further information and evidence.
81. An applicant may amend or withdraw an application, in writing, at any time before a decision has been made.
82. If an application is made online and the Council considers that all the required information has not been provided, the Council will give the applicant the opportunity to provide the required information.

Date on which an application is made

83. The date to be taken as the date on which the application is made is normally the date the application is received by the Council, or the date the applicant first notified the Council of their intention to apply, if this is followed up within one month by a properly completed application. There are some exceptions to this general rule:
- if an applicant has been awarded State Pension Credit which includes a guarantee credit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, and the council tax reduction application is received within one month of the claim for any of the above-listed benefits, the date of application for council tax reduction is the first day of entitlement to one of those benefits;
 - where a working-age applicant, whether or not they are receiving one of the above-listed benefits, becomes liable for council tax for the first time, and the council tax reduction application is received within one month of becoming liable, the date of application for council tax reduction is the date on which council tax liability begins.
 - where a person's council tax banding notification is delayed on moving into a new property, and an application for council tax reduction is made within one month of receiving the banding notification, the date of application is treated as the date on which council tax liability begins;
 - where a couple's relationship comes to an end either due to separation or the death of one of them and the former partner was entitled to council tax reduction and the application is made within three months of the death or separation, the date of application for council tax reduction is the date of death or separation;
 - where an application is not properly completed and is corrected within one month (or longer if the Council considers reasonable) the date of application is the date on which the first contact is made. If the incomplete application is not corrected within one month or other reasonable period, the date of application for council tax reduction is the date when sufficient information becomes available to decide the application;
 - if an applicant or their partner is receiving Universal Credit when they become liable for council tax for the first time, and the council tax reduction application is received within one month of becoming liable, the date of application for council tax reduction is the date on which council tax liability begins;
 - where an applicant or their partner has made a claim for Universal Credit, the application for council tax reduction is treated as made on the first day of the Universal Credit assessment period if:
 - the application is received within one month of the decision to award Universal Credit; or
 - a notification of the intention to apply for council tax reduction is received within one month of the decision to award Universal Credit, and

an application is subsequently received within one month of the intention to apply; or

- a Universal Credit award notice from the Department for Work and Pensions is treated as an application for council tax reduction (see paragraph 79); or
- the applicant is no longer entitled to council tax reduction because of a change in circumstances but becomes re-entitled within six months.

Advance applications

84. An applicant may apply up to 8 weeks in advance if they anticipate that they will become liable to pay council tax during that period. The application is treated as made on the day on which liability for council tax begins.
85. Other than where an applicant is a person treated as not being in Great Britain, the Council may treat an advance application as made in the reduction week before the first week of entitlement to council tax reduction. This applies where an applicant is not entitled to council tax reduction in the week after the actual date of application, but the Council considers that they will become entitled within the next 13 weeks (17 weeks for a pensioner) unless there is a change in circumstances.

Date applications are treated as made and backdating

86. Where a pensioner applies and qualifies for council tax reduction, their application is treated as made 3 months before it was actually made (effectively all applications from pensioners are automatically backdated for a period of 3 months). Where an applicant applies for council tax reduction within one month of being awarded State Pension Credit including the guarantee credit, the three-month period cannot go back any earlier than the date of their State Pension Credit claim.
87. Where a working-age applicant shows a good reason for not making an application earlier, the application can be backdated to the first date that continuous good cause has been established, up to a maximum of [6 months]. This means that the application is backdated to the latest of a) the first day good cause is established, b) the day [6 months] before the date of application, or c) the day [6 months] before the date the request for backdating was made.

Evidence and information

88. Where appropriate, the Council can accept evidence submitted online or by telephone to support an application.
89. An applicant to council tax reduction must provide a National Insurance number for themselves and if appropriate, others for whom they are applying, or evidence that they have applied for a National Insurance number. This requirement does not apply to a:

- child or young person;
 - person from abroad;
 - person subject to immigration control.
90. An applicant to council tax reduction must provide such evidence in support of their application as the Council considers reasonable, within one month of being notified of their duty to do so (or a longer period if the Council so decides). This does not apply to an applicant who is a pensioner in respect of specified income which is ignored in the calculation of council tax reduction or whose income has been verified by The Pensions Service, where the Council has been notified of that income. The Council informs the applicant of their duty to notify any change of circumstances, and if asked by the applicant, which change of circumstances must be notified.
91. The Council can require an applicant to whom council tax reduction has been awarded (or any partner) who is at least the qualifying age for State Pension Credit, to supply information about pension fund holders and suppliers of pension fund schemes.
92. Before a decision has been made on an application, an applicant may amend or withdraw the application by notifying the Council either in writing, by electronic communication or by telephone.

Duty to notify changes in circumstances

93. An applicant, or a person acting on behalf of the applicant, has a duty to report changes in circumstances either before an application has been decided by the Council or after council tax reduction has been awarded. The changes to be reported are those which the applicant might reasonably be expected to know would affect entitlement, and the changes must be notified in writing, by telephone or online within a period of one calendar month from the day when the change occurs, or as soon as reasonably practicable afterwards. Some types of change of circumstance do not need to be reported:
- changes in the amount of council tax payable to the Council;
 - changes in the ages of the applicant and their family or any non-dependants except where someone ceases to be a child or young person;
 - changes which affect the amount of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or income-related Employment Support Allowance or but not the amount of council tax reduction, except where one of the benefits listed above ceases.
94. An applicant who receives State Pension Credit and who has been awarded council tax reduction does not need to report changes in circumstances except:
- any changes relating to a non-dependant's income or residency;

- any absence from the home exceeding or likely to exceed 13 weeks, or 4 weeks if absent abroad.
95. Where State Pension Credit comprises only of Savings Credit, the applicant does not need to report changes in circumstances except the changes listed in paragraph 94 above and in addition:
- changes affecting a child living with them which may result in the amount of council tax reduction (but they do not need to report changes in the age of the child);
 - a change in an applicant's capital which takes, or may take, the total to more than £16,000;
 - certain changes in the income or capital of a non-dependant or partner.¹⁸

Decisions and awards

96. Once the Council is satisfied that an application for council tax reduction has been completed in the proper manner together with all the required evidence and information, it will make the decision within 14 days or as soon as practicable thereafter.
97. Having made the decision on an application, the Council will notify the applicant, or a person appointed to act on behalf of the applicant, immediately or as soon as reasonably practicable afterwards. In the case of any other decision, the Council will notify the applicant within 14 days or as soon as reasonably practicable afterwards. The notification of a decision on an application is normally in the form of a notification letter together with a revised council tax bill which includes:
- a reminder about the duty to report changes in circumstances and an explanation of the consequences of failing to do so;
 - examples of changes that might affect entitlement to council tax reduction or its amount;
 - information about the effect of the decision on the applicant's council tax liability;
 - information about appeal procedures.

Use of information

98. Where it is lawful to do so, the Council uses information provided by the Department for Work and Pensions and His Majesty's Revenues and Customs in order to calculate entitlement to council tax reduction. Similarly, the Council shares information with those departments when it is required to do so.

¹⁸ See paragraph 9 (8) (c) of Schedule 8 to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012

99. The Council may receive, obtain, verify, record and store information relating to applications for council tax reduction, from:
- the applicant;
 - other persons in connection with applications;
 - other local authorities;
 - central government departments.
100. The Council may forward information to anyone in the Council or others authorised to act on behalf of the Council, in processing applications for council tax reduction.

Revisions, suspension, termination and written statements

101. The Council may change or further change a decision at any time, either as a result of a request by the applicant within a reasonable time period or where it receives evidence that the original decision was incorrect.
102. The Council may suspend an award of council tax reduction, in whole or in part, if the Council considers that:
- the applicant or their partner has ceased to be entitled to Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, or Pension Credit;
 - the applicant has ceased to be entitled to Universal Credit;
 - there has been a change in the membership of the applicant's household or in their capital which cannot be immediately determined, whether or not the applicant is receiving Universal Credit;
 - the applicant is not receiving Universal Credit and they or their partner has started remunerative work;
 - the application is fraudulent and/or there is deliberate misrepresentation of the facts in order to take advantage of the scheme, or is the subject of an investigation which has not yet concluded;
 - conditions of entitlement have not been met;
 - the applicant has failed to provide information requested.
103. Where an award of council tax reduction has been suspended because the applicant has failed to provide information requested, they must provide the evidence required within one month beginning with date the notification of suspension was sent, or such longer period as the Council considers necessary. Or they must satisfy the Council within one month that it is not possible to obtain the evidence requested.
104. Where any of the circumstances listed in paragraph 102 cease to apply, the Council will restore the award of council tax reduction.

105. Where any of the circumstances listed in paragraph 102 continue to apply the Council may terminate an award of council tax reduction, in whole or in part, from the date it determines that entitlement ended.
106. An applicant who receives the Council's notification of a decision, or a revised decision, may, within one month of the date of the notification of that decision, request in writing that the Council provides a written statement setting out the reasons for its decision. The Council will send this explanation to the applicant within 14 days of a request, or as soon as reasonably practicable afterwards.

Appeals

107. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the Council's decision on entitlement to council tax reduction or the amount awarded, they may write (including by email) to the Council setting out why they are dissatisfied. The Council will then consider the matter and notify the applicant in writing (usually by email), either that they do not have a case stating the reasons why, or that action has been taken to address their concerns. If the applicant is still dissatisfied, or if the Council does not address their concerns within 2 months, they may appeal to the Valuation Tribunal.

Discretionary awards

108. The Council may use its discretion to reduce council tax liability because of exceptional hardship.¹⁹ This is irrespective of whether an application has been made for council tax reduction under the main scheme, described in this document.
109. An application may be made in writing, online or by telephone (although the applicant will subsequently need to provide a signed statement and any other documentation necessary to support the application).

Electronic communication

110. The Council may use electronic communication (for example via computer networks or mobile phones) in administering council tax reduction and may receive electronic communications including applications online, subject to the following conditions:
- there is an explicit authorisation given by the Council's chief executive;
 - there is an approved method of authentication;
 - approved forms are used;
 - records are maintained in a way specified by the chief executive.
111. Any applications which are not submitted in the approved manner are treated as invalid. The Council may authorise another person or persons to act as

¹⁹ Under section 13A(1)(c) of the [Local Government Finance Act 1992](#), as amended.

intermediaries in connection with the delivery of information electronically and its authentication.

112. Any information delivered electronically is treated as if it were delivered in any other way required by the Council's scheme if the above conditions are met. Information is treated as not delivered until it is accepted by the Council's official computer system. If, for legal reasons, it becomes necessary to prove the identity of the sender or recipient of information sent or received electronically, it is presumed to be the person named on the official computer system. Similarly, if it is necessary to prove that information sent electronically has actually been delivered to the Council, it is treated as received if it is recorded on the official computer system. Similarly, if it is not recorded as received on the official computer system it is treated as not received. And the time, date and content of any electronic communication is presumed to be that recorded on the computer system.

Fraud and

The Council is determined to combat fraud in order to protect both its finances and the wider interests of all taxpayers. The Council makes every effort to prevent and detect fraud by using due diligence and will take appropriate action where an application is found to be fraudulent or misrepresented to take advantage of the scheme. The Council recognises that the use of simple cautions, penalties and prosecutions have a key role to play in deterring offenders.

113. In order to minimise the opportunity for fraud, the Council will:
- verify applications for council tax support rigorously;
 - employ sufficient staff to meet its commitment to combat fraud;
 - actively tackle fraud where it occurs;
 - co-operate with the Department for Work and Pensions and His Majesty's Revenue and Customs in joint-working, including prosecutions and sharing data where appropriate and legal; the work may include joint investigations with them and, where appropriate, assistance in any prosecution. The Council may also work with other organisations such the police;
 - in all cases seek to recover all outstanding council tax.
114. In order to ensure that the above actions are carried out successfully, the Council will put in place all the required administrative policies, procedures and processes. Any fraud investigation will be conducted in accordance with the principles and approach set out in the appropriate legislation²⁰. In all cases where fraud is identified, the Council will consider commencing legal proceedings.

²⁰ In particular, the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) Regulations 2013.

Annex 1 – Glossary of terms

Alternative maximum council tax reduction (pensioners only)	A way of calculating council tax reduction where there is a second adult sharing the household who would normally be expected to contribute towards the council tax bill, but who cannot afford to do so.
Amount for living expenses (pensioners only)	An amount of money assumed to be sufficient to cover day-to-day living expenses. ²¹
Applicant	A person who has made an application to the Council for council tax reduction.
Application	An application for council tax reduction.
Approved blood scheme	A scheme established or approved by the government, or a trust set up with funds provided by the government, to provide compensation for someone infected by contaminated blood products.
Armed Forces Independence Payment	A payment made in accordance with an armed and reserve forces compensation scheme.
Attendance Allowance	A benefit for people of state pension age and over that helps with the extra costs of long-term illness or disability, which can be either physical and/or mental. It is paid regardless of income and savings and is tax-free.
Benefit cap	A limit to the total amount of some benefits that most working-age people can receive. There are different levels of cap for London and the rest of the country.
Boarder	A person who resides with the applicant and who makes payments to the applicant or their partner, on a commercial basis, in return for accommodation and some meals. A boarder is not a non-dependant.
Carer's Allowance	A benefit for someone caring for another person for at least 35 hours a week. It is paid regardless of income and savings but can be taxable.
Caxton Foundation	A charitable trust funded by the government primarily to help someone suffering from hepatitis C.
Child	A person under the age of 16.
Child Benefit	A non-means-tested benefit (below income of £60k) to help with the cost of children. It is usually paid monthly to a person who is responsible for a child either aged under 16 or aged 16 to 20 in full-time education or training.

²¹ The amounts for pensioners are set out in Schedule 2 to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012, and subsequent amendments.

Child Tax Credit	A payment to help with the cost of children aged under 16, or 16 to 20 in full-time education or training, for whom a person is responsible. It is income-related and paid in addition to Child Benefit to people in work and out of work.
Close relative	A parent, parent-in-law, son, son-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, step-parent, step-son, step-daughter, brother, sister. Where any of these close relatives is one member of a couple, the definition includes the other member of that couple.
Concessionary payment	A payment made in certain circumstances to compensate a person for the non-payment of a benefit or a Tax credit.
Council	North Somerset Council, as the billing authority.
Council tax reduction scheme	A scheme designed to help people in financial need pay their council tax.
Couple	Two people living in the same household who are married to, or civil partners of, each other, or are living together as though they were married or civil partners.
Disability Living Allowance	A non-means-tested, non-taxable benefit paid to people who need supervision or help with their daily or nightly care, or who have mobility problems. It has now been replaced for most people by Personal Independence Payment but is still paid for children.
Earnings	Any remuneration or profit derived from employment.
Eileen Trust	A charitable trust funded by the government to pay grants to non-haemophiliac people infected with HIV through treatment with NHS blood or blood products.
Employed earner	A person who is gainfully employed under a contract of service.
Employment and Support Allowance	A benefit paid to working-age people who have an illness, health condition or a disability which makes it difficult or impossible to work. Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance is not means-tested but based on National Insurance contributions. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance is means-tested.
Estrangement	A breakdown of a relationship between 2 persons.
Extended reduction	A set amount of council tax reduction awarded for a specified period, usually 4 weeks.
Family	A couple, or a couple where one or both have responsibility for a child or young person living in the

	same household, or a lone parent who has responsibility for a child or young person living in the same household.
Financial or tax year	The period beginning 6 th April in one year to 5 th April in the following year.
Grenfell Tower support payment	A payment made for the purpose of providing compensation or support in respect of the fire on 14 th June 2017 at Grenfell Tower.
Historical child abuse payment	A payment made under various compensation schemes and redress programmes to acknowledge the harm caused by child abuse and provide support to survivors.
Household	Not defined as such but is given its every-day meaning, taking account of factors such as the overall relationship between the parties, living arrangements and the degree to which facilities are shared. Children and young people are treated as part of the household even when temporarily absent but are not part of the household in certain specific circumstances, such as when they are living in care or formally placed with the applicant.
Housing Benefit	An income-related (means-tested) benefit paid to tenants on low incomes (either in or out of work) to help pay their rent. The scheme is administered by local authorities in accordance with national legislation.
Income Support	An income-related (means-tested) benefit paid to working-age people on low income such as carers and lone parents. It is not usually paid to someone receiving Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance.
Jobseeker's Allowance	A benefit paid to working-age people who are not working (or working less than 16 hours a week) and who are available for, and actively seeking full-time work. Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance is not means-tested but depends on National Insurance contributions. Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance is means-tested.
Joint occupier	A person who is either the co-owner (with the applicant or their partner) of the residence or liable (with the applicant or their partner) to pay council tax. A joint occupier has a legal right to occupy the property. A joint occupier is not a non-dependant.
Local authority	An authority responsible for issuing council tax bills and providing a scheme for council tax reduction.

London Bombings Relief Charitable Fund	The company and registered charity set up to help victims (and their families or dependants) of the terrorist attacks in London on 7 th July 2005.
London Emergencies Trust	A company and registered charity set up to distribute public donations to those affected by a major emergency such as terrorist attacks or other civil disasters in London.
Lone parent	A person who has no partner and who is responsible for a child or young person living in the same household.
Macfarlane Trust	A charitable trust established to help relieve poverty or distress among those suffering from haemophilia.
Maternity leave	A period during which a woman is absent from work because she is pregnant or has given birth to a child, and after which she has the right to return to work.
Medically approved	Certified by a medical practitioner.
MFET Ltd	A company set up to make payments, under arrangements made by the government, to those who have HIV as a result of treatment by the NHS with blood or blood products.
National Emergencies Trust	A registered charity set up to distribute public donations to those affected by a major national emergency or disaster.
National Minimum Wage	The minimum amount that legally must be paid to an employed earner.
National Insurance	A form of taxation on earnings and self-employed profits paid into a fund from which some social security benefits are paid. The Department for Work and Pensions issues National Insurance numbers which are unique to each person and are required when applying for council tax reduction.
Net earnings	The amount of earnings after specified deductions such as income tax and National Insurance contributions.
Net profit	The amount treated as self-employed earnings which is the applicant's total profit less specified deductions such as allowable expenses.
Non-dependant	A person living as a member of the applicant's household who is not their partner, or a child or young person for whom they are responsible, with certain exceptions such as joint-occupiers, boarders and paid carers.

Non-dependant deduction	A set amount deducted from an applicant's council tax reduction as a contribution made by a non-dependant towards household expenditure.
Occupational pension	Any pension or other periodical payment made under an occupational pension scheme.
Official computer system	A computer system maintained by or on behalf of a local authority for sending, receiving, processing or storing of any information.
Paid carer	A person who lives with the applicant in order to care for them or their partner, who is employed by a charity or voluntary organisation, and where a charge is made for their services. A paid carer is not a non-dependant.
Partner	The person who is the other member of a couple.
Paternity leave	A period of leave during which a father or partner is absent from work in order to care for their new-born or newly adopted child, after which they have the right to return to work.
Pensioner	A person who has reached the qualifying age for State Pension Credit and is not (or where there is a partner the partner is not) receiving a working-age income-related benefit.
Personal Independence Payment	A replacement benefit for Disability Living Allowance designed to provide help to people over 16 who need care or who have mobility needs. It is not means-tested or Taxable.
Personal pension scheme	A pension that a person arranges individually which is based on how much is paid into the scheme and how successful the pension provider's investments are.
Polygamous marriage	Any marriage where one party is married to more than one person, and the ceremony of marriage took place under the law of a country which permits polygamy.
Post Office compensation payment	A payment made by the Post Office or the government for the purpose of providing compensation or support either in connection with the failings of the Horizon system or following the judgment in Bates and Others v Post Office Ltd (No 3) "Common Issues".
Public authority	A body or organisation which has a public function, for example the NHS and local authorities.
Relative	A close relative (as defined above) as well as a grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece.

Remunerative work	Where a person is working for at least 16 hours a week (which may be an average) for which payment is made or which is done in expectation of payment.
Resident	An applicant is resident in a dwelling if they occupy it as their sole or main home.
Residence rules	Qualifying conditions whereby an applicant must establish that they have the right to live in the UK and intend to settle in the UK, Isle of Man, Channel Islands or Ireland and make it their home.
Revision	A previous decision is changed (revised) from the same date it originally took effect from. It allows for a review of the original decision, which may lead to changes based on new information or errors.
Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme	A scheme that provides support to people in Scotland who were historically infected with hepatitis C and/or HIV following treatment with NHS blood or blood products.
Second adult reduction (or second adult rebate) – pensioners only	Another term for alternative maximum council tax reduction (see above).
Self-employed earner	A person who is gainfully employed in Great Britain otherwise than in employed-earners employment.
Service user	A person who is consulted by, or on behalf of, certain public bodies.
Skipton Fund	A scheme set up to make payments to people suffering from hepatitis C.
State Pension Credit	An income-related (means-tested) benefit paid to pensioners on a low income. It has two components: the minimum guarantee and an additional ‘savings credit’ designed to reward those who have put by savings and income for retirement.
Sports award	An award made by certain specific sports councils from funds derived from the National Lottery.
Student	A person who is attending or undertaking a course of study at an educational establishment or on a qualifying course. ²²

²² A qualifying course as defined for the purposes of parts 2 and 4 of the [Jobseeker’s Allowance Regulations 1996](#). The course must be employment-related which helps a person to acquire or enhance skills for employment, for seeking employment, or for a particular occupation. It must last for no more than 12 consecutive months and it must be a course at an appropriate level. See also [Annex 8](#) for more comprehensive definitions relating to students.

Supersession	A previous decision is changed from a later date. It is a way to address changes in circumstances or errors in the original decision.
Support or reduction week	A period of 7 days commencing on a Monday and ending on a Sunday.
Temporary absence	A period not exceeding a specified number of weeks where a person is temporarily absent from their home and intending to return to that home and has not sub-let that part of the home they normally occupy.
The Trusts	The Macfarlane Trust, the Macfarlane (Special Payments Trust) and the Macfarlane (Special Payments) (No.2) Trust.
Universal Credit	An income-related (means-tested) benefit for people of working-age who are on a low income. It replaces four existing means-tested benefits, including Housing Benefit, and two Tax credits.
Vaccine Damage Payment	A payment made if you are severely disabled as a result of a vaccination against certain diseases.
Victims of Overseas Terrorism Compensation Scheme	A government funded scheme designed to compensate victims who sustain a relevant injury which is directly attributable to their being a direct victim of a designated act of terrorism overseas.
Voluntary organisation	A body other than a public or local authority whose activities are carried out on a not-for-profit basis.
War Disablement Pension	A payment paid to people who have been injured or disabled as a result of any service in Her Majesty's Armed Forces. The amount paid depends on the severity of the disablement.
War Widow's Pension	A pension payable to the widow, widower or in some circumstances the children of someone killed in the Armed Forces or who died later because of injury in the Armed Forces.
We Love Manchester Emergency Fund	A charity set up to co-ordinate, administer and distribute the monies donated in response to the Manchester Arena attack on 22 May 2017.
Windrush Compensation Scheme	A scheme set up by the government to compensate people who have suffered loss because they are unable to demonstrate their lawful status in the UK.
Working-age applicant	A person who has not reached the qualifying age for State Pension Credit or who has reached that age but is

	receiving (or where there is a partner the partner is receiving) a working-age income-related benefit.
Working Tax Credit	An income-related payment made to someone in paid work but on a low income. Different qualifying conditions apply depending on age and hours worked.
Young person	A person who is a qualifying young person for Child Benefit purposes. The young person must be 16 or over and under 20 and on a course of full-time, non-advanced education or in approved training, or in appropriate full-time education.

Annex 2 - Polygamous marriages

(This annex applies only to pensioners)

A polygamous marriage means any marriage where one party is married to more than one person, and the ceremony of marriage took place under the law of a country which permits polygamy. The amount for living expenses for polygamously married couples is calculated by awarding the highest amount applicable to the applicant and one of their partners.

An additional amount is awarded for each additional spouse in the same household, as set out in the table below:

Category of applicant	Amount for each additional spouse
Pensioner (one or more members of the marriage have attained pension age before 1 st April 2021)	£116.80
Pensioner (all members of the marriage have attained pension age on or after 1 st April 2021)	£114.80

The amounts awarded for children and other components are the same as for other applicants.

Where an applicant is polygamously married they are treated as possessing the income and capital of all partners to the marriage with whom they share the household.

Where a person who is polygamously married lives as a non-dependant member of an applicant's household, only one non-dependant deduction is made, but the amount deducted is the highest applicable after taking account of the circumstances and income of all partners in the marriage.

Annex 3 – Treatment of income - pensioners

(This annex applies only to pensioners)

In the calculation of council tax reduction for pensioners, most income is taken into account, although some types of income are ignored in whole or in part. The definition of income includes earnings, benefits and pensions and the following paragraphs explain how various types of income are treated in the calculation. The income of an applicant's partner is treated as belonging to the applicant.

Income is calculated on a weekly basis. In order to arrive at the weekly amount of earnings and other income to be taken into account, a monthly payment is multiplied by 12 and divided by 52; a three-monthly payment is multiplied by 4 and divided by 52; where the payment is for a year, the amount is divided by 52; in other cases, the amount is converted to a daily amount and multiplied by 7. An assumed income from capital is added (see paragraph xx).

Earnings from employment

In the calculation of council tax reduction, an applicant's net earnings are taken into account, after deductions have been made from their gross earnings for: income tax, class 1 National Insurance contributions, and 50% of contributions to occupational or personal pension schemes.

Where a pensioner applicant has earnings from employment, the weekly amount of earnings is averaged over 5 weeks prior to the first week in which support is payable if the applicant is paid weekly, and 2 months if the applicant is paid monthly. However, where an applicant's earnings fluctuate, earnings can be averaged over any reasonable period. If an applicant has been working for less than 5 weeks or 2 months, the average weekly earnings are estimated based on either any earnings received, if representative of future earnings, or an estimate provided by their employer. If earnings change during the period of an applicant receiving council tax reduction, average earnings are estimated over any reasonable period but not more than 52 weeks (not including earnings received from more than one financial tax year).

Earnings are taken into account from the date of application even if they were not received during the week of application. Where an applicant begins remunerative work after an application for council tax reduction has been made, earnings are taken into account from the first reduction week after they began work, even if they were not actually received in that week. Similar arrangements are made when earnings change.

See Annex 4 for the definition of earnings as an employed earner.

Self-employment

An applicant for council tax reduction is treated as self-employed if they are gainfully employed but not as an employed earner.

Where an applicant is self-employed, weekly earnings are estimated over a reasonable period but no more than over 52 weeks. See Annex 5 for a description of how self-employed earnings are calculated.

Other income

Income other than earnings is fully taken into account unless specified in [Appendix 4](#) which lists income that is ignored. Weekly income other than earnings is also estimated over a reasonable period but no more than over 52 weeks. Any tax payable on gross income is ignored. See Annex 6 for a description of how income other than earnings is calculated.

Benefit income is taken into account over the period in which it is paid. The period over which a tax credit payment is taken into account varies depending on whether the payment is a daily, weekly, two-weekly or four-weekly instalment. Benefit income taken into account is normally the gross amount before any deductions are made from it. If Working Tax Credit is subject to overpayment recovery, the amount of Working Tax Credit taken into account is the net amount, i.e. after the deduction for the overpayment has been made. Capital paid by instalments in some circumstances, and annuity payments, are treated as income.

Where a pensioner is receiving the guarantee part of State Pension Credit, their income and capital are ignored for the purposes of council tax reduction, so the pensioner receives a 100% reduction on their council tax bill. Where a pensioner is receiving only the savings credit part of State Pension Credit, the amount of income and capital used in the Department for Work and Pensions assessment is used for the calculation of council tax reduction.

In most cases, income that the applicant has not obtained (for example, a deferred pension) but is available on application is treated as possessed by them, but only from the date on which it could be obtained. With some exceptions, payments made to third parties on behalf of the applicant are treated as possessed by the applicant.

If it appears to the Council that an applicant has come to an arrangement with a non-dependant member of the household specifically to take advantage of the council tax reduction scheme, where the income and capital of the non-dependant exceeds that of the applicant, the income and capital of the non-dependant is treated as if it were the applicant's, and the applicant's income is ignored.

Childcare charges

Where relevant and subject to certain conditions, childcare charges are deducted. The weekly maximum amounts to be deducted are £175 for one child and £300 for two or more children.

Where incurred, childcare charges can be deducted from income where the applicant is:

- A lone parent who is working at least 16 hours a week;
- A member of a couple both of whom are working at least 16 hours a week;
- A member of a couple one of whom is working and the other is incapacitated, in hospital or in prison.

For the purposes of childcare charges an applicant can be treated as working during the first 28 weeks of a period of sickness providing they were in work immediately before getting a specified sickness or disability benefit (or appropriate National Insurance credits). Also, an applicant can be treated as working if they are absent from work, on maternity, adoption, parental bereavement leave, shared parental or paternity leave, providing they were in work immediately before the leave began and is entitled to statutory, maternity, adoption, paternity, or shared parental pay; or maternity allowance.

To be eligible, the childcare charges must be:²³

- paid by the applicant or their partner;
- in respect of a child who is a member of the applicant's family;
- in respect of a period from the birth of a child until the day before the first Monday in September following the child's 15th birthday (16th birthday if the child is disabled);
- for care provided by specified care providers, for example registered child minders;
- for care provided out of school hours by a school, on school premises, or by a local authority. This applies to children aged from 8 years until the day before the first Monday in September following their 15th birthday (16th birthday if disabled).

The following childcare charges are ineligible:

- payments in respect of the child's compulsory education;
- payments made by an applicant to their partner (or vice versa) in respect of any child for whom they are responsible;
- payment for care provided by a relative of the child which wholly or mainly takes place in the child's home.

Childcare charges are estimated over an appropriate period of no more than one year in order to arrive at an accurate average weekly charge.

²³ See regulation 25 (5-8) to schedule 1 of Council Tax Reduction (Prescribed Requirements (England) Regulations 2012 for a full list of eligible charges and care providers.

Annex 4 - Definition of earnings as an employed earner

(This annex does not apply to applicants receiving Universal Credit²⁴)

The definition of earnings includes the following:

- any bonus or commission;
- payments to compensate for loss of earnings but not redundancy payments;
- payments in lieu of notice or payments intended as compensation for loss of employment;
- holiday pay but not if it is paid more than 4 weeks after employment ends;
- payments made for a period when no actual work has been carried out, for example a retainer;
- any expenses which are not 'wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred' in connection with employment such as travelling expenses between home and work;
- compensation for unfair dismissal from work and any other payment made under employment rights legislation;
- any statutory sick pay, maternity pay, paternity pay, adoption pay, and statutory parental bereavement pay;
- payments made by or on behalf of an employer to an applicant who is on maternity or paternity leave, adoption leave or is absent from work because of illness;
- non-cash vouchers which have been counted when calculating liability to pay National Insurance contributions.

The definition of earnings does not include:

- payments in kind except for non-cash vouchers as above;
- Expenses which are 'wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred' in connection with employment;
- any occupational pension;
- expenses arising from participation in consultation exercises on behalf of specified public authorities;
- In respect of pensioners, any payment of compensation from an employment tribunal in respect of unfair dismissal or unlawful discrimination.

²⁴ The scheme uses the Universal Credit earnings figure provided by DWP which is based on the definition of earnings as an employed earner given in paragraph 55 of the Universal Credit Regulations 2013. This definition is similar but not exactly the same as the one in this Annex.

Annex 5 - Calculation of self-employed earnings

(This annex does not apply to applicants receiving Universal Credit²⁵)

The earnings of a self-employed earner are the gross income from the employment. Local authority payments to foster parents, and certain kinship carers, are not treated as self-employed earnings but as income other than earnings.²⁶ The following are also not regarded as self-employed earnings: payments by a boarder living in the applicant's accommodation, and sports awards.

Royalties, copyright, design, patent, trademark and Public Lending Right Scheme payments are taken into account over a set period of weeks. The number of weeks is obtained by dividing the amount of the payments by the amount of council tax reduction which would be payable had the applicant not received the payments, plus the amount that would normally be ignored in their case.

The earnings to be taken into account are the net profit from the business less, in the case of pensioners, any amount which is ignored under [Appendix 3](#). Where a self-employed applicant is a partner (or a share fisherman) the net profit is their share of the profit.

In order to arrive at a figure for net profit, the following expenses are deducted from gross earnings:

- any expenses 'wholly and exclusively' incurred including repayments of capital on business loans for the replacement of equipment or machinery, or the repair of existing business assets (after any insurance payments);
- appropriate income Tax and National Insurance contributions;
- one half of any sum paid periodically in respect of a personal pension scheme;
- net payments of VAT and interest payments on loans taken out for the purposes of the applicant's business.

The following items are not considered to be expenses:

- capital expenditure.
- depreciation of any capital asset;
- any sum earmarked for setting up or expanding the business;
- losses incurred before the period over which the earnings are calculated;
- repayment of capital on business loans;
- any debts owed to the business except certain irrecoverable debts;
- expenses that the Council consider have not been reasonably incurred.

²⁵ The scheme uses the Universal Credit earnings figure provided by DWP which is based on the definition of self-employed earnings given in [para 57 of the Universal Credit Regulations 2013](#). This definition is similar but not exactly the same as the one in this annex.

²⁶ See paragraph 21 of Schedule 1 to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 for a full definition.

Special arrangements apply in assessing the net profit of childminders. The net profit is one third of the earnings less income tax, National Insurance contributions and one half of the payments to a personal pension scheme.

Where an applicant has more than one employment as a self-employed earner, any losses incurred in any one of their employments cannot be offset against their earnings in any other of their employments.

Annex 6 - Calculation of income other than earnings

(This annex does not apply to applicants receiving Universal Credit)

The following are examples of how an applicant's income other than earnings is calculated:

- where a benefit payment, for example Income Support, includes a deduction to recover an overpayment, it is the gross amount of the benefit that is taken into account;
- where an applicant is receiving a reduced rate of contributory Employment and Support Allowance because of a sanction, it is the full amount that is taken into account;
- where a tax credit for the current tax year includes a deduction to recover an overpayment of tax credits for the previous year, it is the tax credit less the deduction that is taken into account;
- where a student applicant in receipt of a student loan leaves their course prematurely, they are treated as having the same weekly income from the loan as if they had completed the course, but only for the period during which they attended the course.

Annex 7 - Income which is treated as capital (and capital treated as income)

(This annex does not apply to applicants receiving Universal Credit)

The following income is treated as capital:

- occasional bonus payments to part-time coastguards, fire-fighters, and those manning lifeboats;
- refunds of income tax deducted from profits or emoluments chargeable to income tax under Schedule D or E;
- any holiday pay which is paid more than 4 weeks after the employment ends;
- with some exceptions (see [Appendix 5](#)) any income derived from capital but only from the date it is normally due to be credited to the applicant's account;
- any advance of employed earnings or any loan made by the applicant's employer;

- except for payments made by certain specified²⁷ trust funds, any charitable or voluntary payment which is not made, or due to be made, at regular intervals;
- the gross receipts of any commercial activity undertaken by a self-employed applicant receiving council tax reduction, but only if those receipts were payable into a special account;
- any arrears of subsistence allowance which are paid to an applicant as a lump sum;
- in the case of pensioners, any arrears of working tax credit, child tax credit or state pension credit paid after an award of council tax reduction has been made;
- in the case of working age applicants, any arrears of working tax credit and child tax credit;
- any payment made through an approved trust for providing assistance to a disabled person whose disabilities were caused by the Thalidomide drug.

The following capital is treated as income:

- capital paid by instalments outstanding at the date the application is made (or treated as made) which, together with other capital, would take the applicant over the capital limit;
- payments received under an annuity;
- a career development loan paid under section 2 of the Employment and Training Act 1973;
- periodic payments to the applicant as a consequence of personal injury.

Annex 8 - Students

(This annex does not apply to applicants receiving Universal Credit)

Pensioner students are eligible for council tax reduction if they are liable for council tax and satisfy the other eligibility conditions. The student income of a pensioner is not taken into account in any award.

To be eligible for council tax reduction, a working-age student must be liable for council tax, satisfy the other eligibility conditions, and be in one of the following categories:

- receiving Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- a lone parent;
- a student who has a full-time student partner one of whom has responsibility for a child or young person;
- disabled and entitled to Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment;
- a single foster carer;

²⁷ For the full list of specified trusts, see [Appendix 6](#) to this scheme under 'Compensation' on page 61.

- treated by the Department for Work and Pensions as incapable of work (or having limited capability for work) for a continuous period of at least 196 days;
- under 21 and not in higher education;
- under 20 and someone receives Child Benefit for them;
- receiving a Disabled Student's Allowance for deafness;
- have interrupted their course due to illness or caring responsibilities (with the approval of their college or university) for the period between their illness or caring responsibilities ending when they return to University, but only if they do not receive student finance during that time;
- covered by medical evidence saying that they have not been able to work due to illness or disability for at least 28 weeks;
- a part-time student.

Calculation of grant income

A student's grant income is taken fully into account, except payments for the following:

- tuition or examination fees;
- in respect of disability;
- residential study away from their normal place of study;
- maintaining a home away from their normal place of study;
- £390 for the cost of books and equipment, £303 for travel expenses, whether or not the costs are actually incurred (but only where the student does not have or is treated as not having a student loan);
- childcare costs for a dependent child;
- higher education bursary for care leavers;
- the grant for dependants known as the parents' learning allowance.

Grant income is normally apportioned on a weekly basis over the period of study (see definition below) for which it is paid.²⁸ This generally means the period beginning with the start of the course and ending with the last day of the course. If the grant is paid for a different period to the period of study, it is taken into account over that different period. In the case of a sandwich course, any periods of work experience are excluded from this calculation.

A student may receive other income (for example a gift) to cover expenditure necessarily incurred in respect of the above items. However, where that income is greater than the cost of the item(s) for which it is intended, any excess is taken into account as income. For example, if a student is given £400 for the cost of books, £390 would be ignored and £10 taken into account.

²⁸ The main exception relates to grants for dependants in certain circumstances. These are divided equally over 52 or 53 weeks as appropriate.

Calculation of student loans

A student loan (or a postgraduate master's or doctoral degree loan) is treated as income. This also applies where a student does not have a loan but could obtain one. If a student is treated as having a loan it is the maximum amount available (or in the case of a postgraduate master's or doctoral degree loan 30% of the maximum available) which is treated as income.

A fixed amount of £390 towards the cost of books and equipment, and £303 towards the cost of travel is deducted from the loan income, whether or not the costs are actually incurred.

Any loan taken out by a student to pay their fee contribution to an educational establishment is ignored.

Any special support loan to defray the cost of books, equipment, travel or childcare incurred for the purpose of attending a designated course, is ignored in calculating a student's income.²⁹

Loan income is calculated by dividing the amount of the loan, less any amount that is ignored, by the number of weeks in the period of study for which it is paid. This means:

- (a) where the course is of a single academic year's duration or less, from the first day of the single academic year, or the first day of the course, and ending with the last day of the course.
- (b) where the academic year of the course starts other than on 1st September, from the first day of that academic year, ending with the last day of that academic year, but excluding weeks falling entirely within the long vacation.
- (c) in respect of the final academic year of a course which is not of a single year's duration, from the beginning of either (i) the first day of that academic year, or (ii) where the final academic year starts on 1st September, the earlier of 1st September or the first day of the autumn term and ending with the last day of the course.
- (d) in any other case, from the first week in September or the first day of the autumn term and ending with the last day of June.

Other issues

Any discretionary access funds paid periodically by a college or university are ignored unless intended for and used for specified basic needs,³⁰ in which case the funds are fully taken into account. In particular, access funds are ignored as income where they are paid after 1st September or after the first day of the course in anticipation of a student receiving a student

²⁹ See regulations 2(5), 3(5), 4(5) and 5(5) of the [Social Security \(Treatment of Postgraduate Master's Degree Loans and Special Support Loans\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#).

³⁰ The basic needs are food, ordinary clothing or footwear, household fuel or rent, or any council tax or water charges for which the applicant (or a member of their family) is liable.

loan, or are paid before the first day of the course in anticipation of the applicant becoming a student.

Where access funds are paid by way of a lump sum, the lump sum is treated as capital. However, where the lump sum is used for items other than specified basic needs it is ignored for a period of 52 weeks from the date of payment.

Where a student's partner has been assessed for a contribution to his grant or loan, that contribution is taken into account as income, but an equal amount of the partner's income is ignored.

For the purposes of this scheme, the following definitions apply:

Academic year - the period of twelve months beginning on 1st January, 1st April, 1st July or 1st September, according to whether the course begins in the winter, the spring, the summer or the autumn. But if students are required to begin attending the course during August or September and continue attending through the autumn, the academic year of the course begins in the autumn rather than the summer.

Course of study - any course of study, whether or not it is a sandwich course, and whether or not a grant is made for undertaking or attending it.

Full-time student - a person who is attending or undertaking a full-time course of study, including a student on a sandwich course. A funded course of study is usually regarded as full-time if it involves over 16 hours of guided learning a week. Whether or not an unfunded course is full-time depends on the nature of the course as a whole.³¹

Grant - any kind of grant or award other than a payment from access funds. It includes any scholarship, studentship, exhibition, allowance or bursary. It does not include an educational maintenance allowance (or analogous payments).

Period of study - this is defined as follows:

- a) in the case of a course of study for one year or less, the period beginning with the start of the course and ending with the last day of the course;
- b) in the case of a course of study for more than one year, in any year other than the final year of the course, the period beginning with that year's start and ending with either: (i) the day before the start of the next year of the course in a case where the student's grant or loan is assessed at a rate appropriate to their studying throughout the year; or (ii) in any other case, the day before the start of the normal summer vacation appropriate to their course;
- c) in the final year of a course of study of more than one year, the period beginning with that year's start and ending with the last day of the course.

Qualifying course - as defined for the purposes of parts 2 and 4 of the [Jobseeker's Allowance Regulations 1996](#). The course must be employment-related which helps a person to acquire

³¹ For a fuller definition of full-time course of study used in this scheme see regulation 53 (1) of the [Housing Benefit Regulations 2006](#).

or enhance skills for employment, for seeking employment, or for a particular occupation. It must last for no more than 12 consecutive months, and it must be a course at an appropriate level.

Sandwich course³² – consists of alternate periods of full-time study in an institution and periods of work experience. The student attends full-time study for at least 18 weeks in each year.

Student - a person who is attending or undertaking a course of study at an educational establishment or who is on a qualifying course.

Student loan – a loan towards a student's maintenance.

³² See regulation 2(9) of the [Education \(Student Support\) Regulations 2008](#) for more detail.

Appendix 1 - Living expenses (pensioners only)

(This appendix applies only to pensioners)

The amounts for living expenses consist of amounts for the applicant and, where appropriate, their partner (known as personal allowances), amounts for children and young people, and additional amounts, known as premiums, mainly for disability and caring responsibilities.

Amounts for the applicant	£ per week
Single person or lone parent who has reached pension age before 1 st April 2021	235.20
Single person or lone parent who has reached pension age on or after 1 st April 2021	218.15
Couple, where one or both members have reached pension age before 1 st April 2021	352.00
Couple, where both members have reached pension age on or after 1 st April 2021	332.95
Amounts for children, young people	£ per week
Dependent child/young person aged under 20 ³³	83.24
Premiums	£ per week
Disabled child premium (for each child)	80.01
Carer premium	45.60
Enhanced disability premium for a single applicant	20.85
Enhanced disability premium for a couple	29.75

³³ This was limited to 2 children/young persons from 1st April 2018 in the prescribed scheme which applies to pensioners.

Enhanced disability premium for a child	32.20
Severe disability premium for a single applicant	81.50
Severe disability premium for a couple (one qualifies)	81.50
Severe disability premium for a couple (both qualify)	163.00

A brief explanation of qualifying conditions for the various premiums:

Disabled child premium

This applies where an applicant or partner is responsible for a child or young person living in their household who meets at least one of the following conditions:

- is registered as severely sight-impaired or blind;
- receives Disability Living Allowance;
- receives Child Disability Payment;
- receives Personal Independence Payment;
- receives the Adult Disability Payment;
- receives an Armed Forces Independence Payment; or
- would receive one of these benefits if they were not in hospital.

The disabled child premium is paid for each child who satisfies one of the above conditions. It is also paid for a period of 8 weeks following the death of child or young person, provided that Child Benefit is paid following the death.

Carer Premium

This applies where an applicant or partner is entitled to Carer's Allowance (including where Carer's Allowance is not paid because of overlapping benefit rules). The applicant must have made a claim for Carer's Allowance in order for the premium to apply.

Entitlement to the carer premium continues for eight weeks after caring or entitlement to Carer's Allowance ceases, or where the person being cared for has died. The period of eight weeks begins on the Sunday following the death, or from the date of the death if this is a Sunday.

If entitlement to Carer's Allowance ends for any other reason, the premium will continue to apply for eight weeks.

If both the applicant and their partner qualify for a carer premium, two premiums are paid.

Enhanced disability premium

This applies where an applicant or their partner or a member of their family is under the qualifying age for State Pension Credit and receiving the disability premium or income-related Employment Support Allowance, and one of the following:

- Personal Independence Payment daily living component at the standard or higher ('enhanced') rate;
- Armed Forces Independence Payment;
- Disability Living Allowance care component at the highest rate;
- The care component of Child Disability Payment at the highest rate.
- The daily living component of the Adult Disability Payment at the enhanced rate.

Or an applicant is in the support group for income-related Employment Support Allowance.

Severe disability premium

This applies where an applicant is receiving one of the following qualifying benefits:

- Personal Independence Payment daily living component;
- Armed Forces Independence Payment;
- Disability Living Allowance care component at the middle or highest rate;
- Attendance Allowance (or Constant Attendance Allowance paid with Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit or War Pension).
- The daily living component of Adult Disability Payment at the standard or enhanced rate.

A further condition is that there are no non-dependants aged 18 or over is living with the applicant, unless they are in one of these situations:

- they receive a qualifying benefit;³⁴
- they are registered blind;
- they are a boarder or sub-tenant (but not a close relative);
- they make separate payments to the landlord.

The severe disability premium is not paid if someone is receiving Carer's Allowance, or the carer's element of Universal Credit, for looking after the applicant.

Couples receive the higher amount of severe disability premium if both of them are eligible, or the lower amount if:

- someone receives Carer's Allowance, or the carer's element of Universal Credit, for looking after only one member of the couple; or

³⁴ The qualifying benefits are Attendance Allowance, the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the highest or middle rate, or the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment at the standard or enhanced rate.

- only one member of the couple meets the eligibility criteria and the other is registered blind.

Appendix 2 - Alternative Maximum Council Tax Reduction (pensioners only)

(This appendix applies only to pensioners)

Applicants may qualify for council tax reduction through the alternative maximum council tax reduction route, sometimes known as the second adult reduction or rebate. This is where there is a second adult (or adults) sharing the household who would normally be expected to contribute towards the council tax bill, but who cannot afford to do so. The amount of the reduction depends on the income of the second adult:

Where the second adult or all second adults are in receipt of Income Support, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or State Pension Credit.	25% ³⁵
Where the gross income of the second adult, or where there is more than one second adult, their aggregate income (ignoring income from income-related benefits) is less than £265 per week.	15%
As above, but where the income is £265 per week but less than £344 per week.	7.5%
Where a dwelling would be wholly occupied by students (who are not entitled to council tax reduction under the main scheme) but for the presence of one or more second adults in receipt of an income-related benefit.	100%

In calculating a second adult's gross income, payments of Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Armed Forces Independence Payment are ignored. Payments from certain specified trusts such as the Macfarlane Trust are also ignored.

³⁵ Where an applicant is jointly liable for council tax with one or more persons in the household (other than their partner), the amounts in this table are divided by the number of persons who are jointly liable.

Appendix 3 - Earnings that are ignored fully or in part (pensioners only)

(This appendix applies only to pensioners)

Earnings paid before the first day of entitlement

Where an applicant ceases employment as an employed earner because of retirement and is entitled to retirement pension (or would be if they satisfied the contribution conditions), their earnings are ignored from the date after the employment has been terminated.

Where an applicant ceases employment as an employed earner, for reasons other than retirement, before the first day of entitlement to council tax reduction, their earnings are ignored except for certain specified payments.³⁶

Where an applicant has not ceased employment, but their working hours have decreased to fewer than 16, or they are ill before the first day of entitlement to council tax reduction, the earnings are ignored other than specified payments such as statutory sick pay, statutory maternity pay, paternity or shared parental pay.

The above paragraphs also apply when an applicant has been working part-time (fewer than 16 hours a week) and that employment either comes to an end or is interrupted.

Similar arrangements apply when employment or part-time employment as a self-employed earner comes to an end: earnings, other than royalties or analogous payments, are ignored from the date the employment ended.

Earnings paid when council tax reduction has been awarded

The applicant's earnings which are ignored are shown in the table below. The amounts shown are not cumulative.

Amount ignored	Circumstances which must apply
All	Where the applicant is receiving Pension Credit
£20	Entitled to a disability or severe disability premium, work-related activity or support component of Employment and Support Allowance or a carer premium. (NB £20 in total for couples.)
£25	Lone parent.
£10	Couples where £20 is not ignored.
£20	Where the applicant receives earnings from employment as a part-time fire fighter, auxiliary coastguard, manning or launching a lifeboat or being a member of any territorial or reserve force. (NB £20 in total for couples if they are both employed in this way.)
£5	Single person where £20 is not ignored.
All	Earnings of a child or young person.

³⁶ The specified payments are retainers, compensation for unfair dismissal, payments deemed to be earnings, guarantee payments, and remuneration on suspension from work on medical or maternity grounds following a complaint to an employment tribunal.

Where £20 of an applicant's earnings are ignored under the above provisions within a period of 8 weeks of reaching pension age, and they continue in employment, £20 of their earnings continue to be ignored, providing there is entitlement to council tax reduction. This also applies if there is a break which does not exceed 8 weeks in either their employment or entitlement to council tax reduction, following the first day in respect of which an award of council tax reduction is made under this scheme.

If earnings are paid abroad and cannot be transferred to the United Kingdom they are ignored whilst the situation exists. If earnings paid in a different currency have to be converted into sterling, any banking charge or commission is ignored.

In addition to the amounts listed in the table above a further £17.10 is ignored where the applicant:

- qualifies for a 30-hour element in the calculation of their Working Tax Credit;
- is aged at least 25 and who works for at least 30 hours a week or who has a partner who does so;
- has a partner and one of them is working 16 hours or more a week and whose family includes at least one child or young person;
- is a lone parent working 16 hours a week or more;
- is working or their partner is working 16 hours or more a week and is entitled to a disability premium, a work-related activity component or a support component of Employment and Support Allowance.

Appendix 4 - Income other than earnings that is ignored fully or in part (pensioners only)

(This appendix applies only to pensioners)

Income wholly ignored – benefit payments:

- Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment Armed Forces Independence Payment and any mobility supplement paid to members of the armed forces;
- War Disablement Pension, a War Widow's or War Widower's Pension and certain analogous payments;
- Christmas bonus for pensioners;
- Guardian's Allowance;
- Child Benefit;
- Housing Benefit;
- Discretionary Housing Payments;
- payments made under a local welfare provision (formerly part of the Social Fund);
- any increase in the rate of social security benefits for a dependant who is not a member of the applicant's family.

Income wholly ignored – expenses:

- any payment made for expenses incurred for unpaid voluntary work;
- payments arising from participation in consultation exercises undertaken by certain public bodies;
- payments for expenses to attend a court of law (for example, travel, subsistence and accommodation), for example to attend jury service or when acting as a witness;
- payments for NHS travelling expenses and remission of charges made by the NHS;
- any payment of expenses in respect of an employed earner that is 'wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred'.

Income wholly ignored – other:

- charitable and voluntary payments, but not where the payment is made by a former partner of the applicant, or former partner of any member of the applicant's family or the parent of a child or young person where they are a member of the applicant's family;
- any of the following payments made to the applicant in consequence of their personal injury: from a trust, from an annuity following any agreement or court order or from funds derived from a payment made, or from a payment received under any agreement or court order; but not where the payment is made by a former partner of the applicant, or former partner of any member of the applicant's family or the parent of a child or young person where they are a member of the applicant's family;
- any payment made to the applicant as a holder of the Victoria Cross, the George Cross or any analogous payment;

- payments made from the Macfarlane and similar trusts, and certain analogous payments;
- any payment made under the Assisted Prison Visit's Scheme set up to help relatives or other persons to visit persons in custody;
- payments akin to education maintenance allowance;
- training allowances paid under section 2 of the Employment and Training Act 1973 except where they are paid instead of a social security benefit or they are paid for cost-of-living expenses;³⁷
- any payment made under the Employment Services Access to Work scheme for disabled people;
- direct payments made to disabled people to buy services and direct payments in lieu of health care;
- payments made by a local authority to enable the applicant or their partner to live independently;
- payments made in consequence of a reduction in council tax;
- a parental contribution taken into account in calculating a student's grant or loan, and payments where there is not a grant or loan up to a limited extent;
- payments made to the applicant by a child, young person or non-dependant;
- child maintenance payments except when paid by the applicant or their partner (working-age applicants);
- certain payments made in respect of adoption, fostering and provision of respite care;
- payments made in lieu of vouchers for Healthy Start food and vitamins or for milk tokens;
- income in kind;
- income derived from capital in most circumstances;
- income from abroad that cannot be transferred to the United Kingdom;
- any banking charges or commission to convert a payment of income into sterling;
- payments received under an insurance policy taken out against the risk of being unable to maintain certain loan repayments, but only to the extent that the payments cover the applicant's loan commitments together with any premiums;
- income from an annuity purchased with a loan, taken out by a pensioner and secured on a home in which the applicant lives;
- discretionary payments made to a pensioner by a trust (unless paid to meet living expenses or housing costs in which case only up to £20 of the income is ignored);
- Tax on income which is otherwise taken into account;
- payments of income which are treated as capital under this scheme;
- payments in respect of certain NHS charges, for example dental treatment;
- sports awards, unless they are intended for specified basic needs.³⁸

³⁷ These cost-of-living expenses are for food, ordinary clothing or footwear, household fuel or rent, or any council tax or water charges for which the applicant (or a member of their family) is liable.

³⁸ See footnote 37 above for the definition of basic needs.

- payments made in connection with the Homes for Ukraine scheme.³⁹

Income partially ignored

- £15 of any Widowed Mother's Allowance or Widowed Parents' Allowance;
- £15 of maintenance payments in respect of a child or young person (pensioners);
- £20 of payments to the applicant made by sub-tenants of the applicant's home with a formal liability to pay rent;
- £20 of payments made by a boarder plus half the amount in excess of £20;
- payments of Working Tax Credit up to £17.10 where the full £17.10 cannot be ignored under [Appendix 3](#) of this scheme.

(Some income ignored is subject to an overall maximum of £20.)

³⁹ the Homes for Ukraine scheme means the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme which was announced in Parliament on 14th March 2022. See regulation 17 of the Council tax reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012, inserted by the [Council Tax Reduction Schemes \(Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2023](#).

Appendix 5 - Capital that is ignored⁴⁰

(This appendix does not apply to applicants receiving Universal Credit⁴¹)

Property

- the dwelling normally occupied by the applicant as their home including any garden, garage and outbuildings;
- premises occupied wholly or partly by a partner, relative or any member of the applicant's family as their home where that person has attained the qualifying age for State Pension Credit or is incapacitated;⁴²
- premises occupied by a former partner as their home providing that the applicant is not estranged or divorced from their former partner, nor where the applicant had formed a civil partnership that has been dissolved;
- any premises that the applicant acquires, or is taking legal advice or proceedings to possess, and intends to occupy as their home within 26 weeks from the date of acquisition, or from the date on which they took legal advice or proceedings, or within a longer period if the Council considers reasonable;
- any sum solely attributable to the sale of premises formerly occupied by the applicant as their home which is to be used for the purchase of other premises that they intend to occupy as their home within 26 weeks of the sale, or a longer period if the Council considers reasonable and necessary to secure the purchase;
- the applicant's former home which they left following estrangement, divorce or dissolution of a civil partnership for a period of 26 weeks from the date on which the applicant left the home. Where the applicant's former home is occupied by the former partner who is a lone parent, the value of the home is ignored so long as the former partner continues to occupy the home;
- for 26 weeks or longer if reasonable, the value of any premises which the applicant is taking reasonable steps either to dispose of, or to obtain possession of, or which they intend to occupy after essential repairs or alterations;
- for 26 weeks or longer if reasonable, any grant made by a local authority in order to help purchase premises that an applicant intends to occupy as their home or for essential repairs or alterations to be carried out and make fit for occupation;
- deposits held by a housing association, and (for 26 weeks or a longer period if the Council considers reasonable) deposits that were so held and earmarked for buying a home;
- for a period of 52 weeks, any sum of money paid to, or on behalf of, the applicant for the sole purpose of buying a property which they intend to occupy as their home, or to meet the cost of essential repairs or alterations to that home;

⁴⁰ See Schedule 6 to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 for a full list.

⁴¹ Subject to paragraph xx of this scheme (circumstances where the Council uses its own figures for capital). In most cases, the Council uses the amount of capital decided by DWP in the Universal Credit claim and this will exclude capital disregarded in accordance with [Schedule 10 of the Universal Credit Regulations 2013](#).

⁴² The term 'incapacitated' is not defined but should be given its broad meaning.

- any future interest in property (for example where a person has been left property for life that the applicant is due to inherit on their death) but not where the applicant has granted a lease or tenancy including sub-leases or sub-tenancies;
- payments for repair to, or replacement of, personal possessions, repairs or improvements to the home, for a period of 26 weeks or a longer period if the Council considers it reasonable;
- for a period of 52 weeks, payments under an insurance policy for the loss or damage to the property, occupied by the applicant as their home, and their personal possessions;
- the business assets owned wholly or partly by the applicant while working for the business, but where they cease working, the value of the business assets are ignored only for a period in which the Council decides is reasonable to allow for the disposal of such assets;
- the business assets owned wholly or in part by the applicant where they would be working but for an illness or disability, and intends to re-engage in that business on recovery, for a period of 26 weeks, or within a longer period that the council considers reasonable.

Benefits

- capital already taken into account when the applicant is receiving, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, or income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- payments of arrears or compensation in respect of any specified benefit⁴³, discretionary housing payment, and tax credit, for a period of 52 weeks from the date of receipt of those arrears;
- payments made under a local welfare provision (formerly part of the Social Fund) sometimes known as occasional assistance;
- any payment of a Widowed Parent's Allowance made to the survivor of a cohabiting partnership following the death of their partner, who was entitled to Widowed Parent's Allowance before 9th February 2023, and in respect of the period ending the day before a claim for Widowed Parent's Allowance is made. The payment is ignored for a period of 52 weeks from the date of receipt or 1st April 2024, whichever is later;
- any payment of a Bereavement Support Payment made for the first month of entitlement, for a period of 52 weeks from the date of receipt of the payment;
- any payment of a Bereavement Support Payment made to the survivor of a cohabiting partnership, following the death of their partner, who was entitled to Bereaved Support payment before 9th February 2023 at the higher rate and the payment is for more than one month's entitlement. The payment is ignored for a period of 52 weeks from the date of receipt or 1st April 2024, whichever is later;

⁴³ See paragraph 21(2) of Schedule 6 to Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) for a list of specified benefits.

- any payment to rectify or compensate for an official error relating to specified social security benefits, but where the payment is £5,000 or more, only as long as the payment is made on or after the date on which council tax reduction is awarded and only for the duration of that award;
- where an applicant is entitled to council tax reduction solely through the alternative council tax reduction route (see [Appendix 2](#)), all their capital is ignored.

Compensation

- any payments made from the Macfarlane Trust, the Macfarlane (Special Payments) Trust, the Macfarlane (Special Payments) (No. 2) Trust, the Fund, the Eileen Trust, MFET Limited, the Skipton Fund, the Caxton Foundation, the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme, an approved blood scheme, the London Emergencies Trust, the We Love Manchester Emergency Fund, the Windrush Compensation Scheme, the National Emergencies trust or the London Bombings Relief Charitable Fund; any Grenfell Tower support payment, a historical child abuse payment, a Windrush payment, the Victims of Overseas Terrorism Compensation Scheme, Post Office compensation payment, or a Vaccine Damage Payment;
- Any payment out of the estate of a person made under the Scottish Infected Blood Scheme or an approved blood scheme where the payment is made to the person's son, daughter, step-son or step-daughter;
- Any lump-sum payments made from the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme;
- any payment made to the applicant or their partner as a result of personal injury but only for a period of 52 weeks;
- compensation paid to children and young people for personal injury, or the death of a parent, while the capital is held by a court or administered by a responsible person;
- any £10,000 ex gratia payment made as a result of imprisonment or internment by the Japanese during the Second World War;
- the value of certain trust funds derived from payments made as a result of personal injury;
- certain trust payments made to the applicant or a member of their family to compensate those who suffer from or who have died from variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease;
- payments made to people who were slaves or forced labourers, suffered property loss or personal injury, or who were parents of a child who died during the Second World War;
- payments made to those with an annuity policy from the Equitable Life Assurance Company.

Other

- personal possessions unless they have been bought to secure or increase entitlement to council tax reduction;
- cash payments made by a local authority to help children in need;

- payments made by a local authority to a person aged 18 or over who was formerly in the applicant's care and continues to live with the applicant and who gives the payments to the applicant;
- payments made by a local authority under the Energy Rebate Scheme 2022⁴⁴
- any other payments made by the Government to help with the cost of living;
- any payment made in connection with the Homes for Ukraine scheme;⁴⁵
- any payments in kind made by a charity, or made from the MacFarlane Trust, the Macfarlane (Special Payments) Trust, the Macfarlane (Special Payments) (No. 2) Trust, the Fund, the Eileen Trust, MFET Limited, the Skipton Fund, the CaXton Foundation, the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme, an approved blood scheme, the London Emergencies Trust, the We Love Manchester Emergency Fund, the Windrush Compensation Scheme, the National Emergencies trust or the London Bombings Relief Charitable Fund; any Grenfell Tower support payment, a historical child abuse payment, a Windrush payment, the Victims of Overseas Terrorism Compensation Scheme, Post Office compensation payment, or a Vaccine Damage Payment;
- any payment other than a training allowance made to assist disabled people to obtain or retain employment;
- any payment made for travelling or other expenses relating to participation in a recognised work programme;
- payments made to help people select, train for, obtain and retain employment under the Employment and Training Act 1973;
- for 52 weeks, any payment to a self-employed person in order to establish or develop their business;
- any payment made by a local authority to a blind homeworker under specified provisions;
- any payment made to the applicant as holder of the Victoria or George Cross;
- payments akin to an education maintenance allowance;
- for 52 weeks, any arrears of subsistence allowance;
- for 52 weeks, payments made by a local authority intended to enable an applicant or their partner to live independently in their accommodation;
- any direct payments for health care;
- certain payments made in respect of adoption, fostering and guardianship support;

⁴⁴ the Energy Rebate Scheme 2022 means the scheme to provide financial support in respect of energy bills which was announced in Parliament by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 3rd February 2022. See regulation 16 of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012, inserted by the Council tax (Demand Notices and Reduction Schemes) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 – SI 2022/127.

⁴⁵ the Homes for Ukraine scheme means the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme which was announced in Parliament on 14th March 2022. See regulation 17 of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012, inserted by the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2023.

- for 52 weeks, payments made in respect of certain NHS charges, hospital travel costs, payments in lieu of Healthy Start food vouchers, milk tokens or the supply of vitamins, and for assisted prison visits;
- the surrender value of annuities or the right to receive income under them;
- the surrender value of any life insurance policy;
- where a payment of capital is made by instalments, the value of the right to receive outstanding instalments;
- for 26 weeks, sports awards unless intended for basic needs;⁴⁶
- the value of the right to receive any income payable abroad which cannot be transferred to the United Kingdom;
- any banking charges or commission to convert a payment of capital into sterling;
- the right to receive any income under a life interest or life rent;
- the value of any funeral plan contract;
- the value of the right to receive an occupational or personal pension;
- the value of the right to receive any rent except where the applicant has a reversionary interest in the property where rent is due;
- the value of any funds held under a personal pension scheme;
- any lump sum payments of retirement pension, graduated retirement benefit, or state pension when entitlement to a pension has been deferred, for as long as the applicant chooses the lump sum option.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ The basic needs are food, ordinary clothing or footwear, household fuel or rent, or any council tax or water charges for which the applicant (or a member of their family) is liable.

⁴⁷ The circumstances where a lump sum option is available are set out in Schedule 5 and 5A to [Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992](#), Schedule 1 to the [Social Security \(Graduated Retirement Benefit\) Regulations 2005](#), and section 8(2) of the [Pensions Act 2014](#).

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Council Tax Hardship Fund Policy

January 2026



CONTENTS

1. Background
2. Council Tax Hardship Fund and Equalities
3. Purpose of this policy
4. Statement of objectives
5. Awarding a Hardship Fund Payment
6. Publicity
7. Making a claim
8. Change in circumstances
9. Duties of customer
10. Amount and duration of award
11. Payment of award
12. Overpayments
13. Notification of an award
14. Reconsidering decisions
15. Fraud
16. Legislation

1. Background

The Hardship Fund has been set up to cover the shortfall between Council Tax liability and payments of Council Tax Reduction and is effective from 01 April 2026.

Every customer who is entitled to Council Tax Reduction and who has a shortfall is entitled to make a claim for help from the Fund.

The main features of the Fund are that:

- Hardship Fund awards are discretionary
- Customers do not have a statutory right to an award
- The Hardship Fund Policy is held within the main Council Tax Reduction scheme
- Hardship Fund awards are not a payment of the main Council Tax Reduction scheme
- It is a cash limited fund
- Only working age customers can make an application
- Council Tax Reduction must be in payment in the week in which a Hardship Fund award is made
- North Somerset Council may decide that a backdated award is appropriate; which could then settle council tax arrears. This would be the only circumstance where the Hardship Fund could be used to facilitate payment of Council Tax arrears.

In addition to this fund there is a Discretionary Housing Payments scheme which covers the shortfall between rent and Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

2. Exceptional hardship fund and equalities

The creation of an Exceptional Hardship Fund facility meets North Somerset Council's obligations under the Equalities Act.

The Government has been clear that, in developing a local Council Tax Reduction scheme, vulnerable groups should be protected. Other than statutory protection for low income pensioners, the Government has not prescribed the other groups that local Councils should support.

We recognise the importance of protecting our most vulnerable customers and also the impact these changes have. We have created a Hardship Fund to ensure that we protect and support those most in need. The Exceptional Hardship Fund is intended to help in cases of extreme financial hardship and not support a lifestyle.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to specify how North Somerset Council will operate the scheme, and to indicate some of the factors which will be considered when deciding if a Hardship Fund payment can be made.

Each case will be treated on its own merits and all customers will be treated fairly and equally in the accessibility to the Fund and also the decisions made with applications. Where a customer is not claiming a Council Tax discount to which they may be entitled or a welfare benefit or additional financial assistance, they will be advised, and assisted in making a claim to maximise their income, before their claim for Hardship Funds will be decided.

4. Statement of objectives

North Somerset Council will, through the operation of this policy, aim to:

- Allow a short period of time for someone to adjust to unforeseen short-term circumstances and to enable them to “bridge the gap” during this time
- Support people in managing their finances
- Help customers through personal crises and difficult events that affect their finances
- Aim to help prevent exceptional hardship
- Support vulnerable young people in the transition to adult life
- Helping those who are trying to help themselves financially
- Alleviate poverty
- Sustain tenancies and prevention of homelessness
- Keep families together
- Encourage and support people to obtain and sustain employment
- Give support to those who are financially vulnerable

The Exceptional Hardship Fund is a short-term emergency fund, awarded whilst the customer seeks alternative solutions.

It cannot be awarded for the following circumstances:

- Where full Council Tax liability is being met by Council Tax Reduction.
- For any other reason, other than to reduce Council Tax liability.
- To reduce any Council Tax Reduction recoverable overpayment.

- To cover previous years Council Tax arrears.
- When Council Tax Reduction is suspended.

5. Awarding an exceptional hardship fund payment

We will decide whether or not to make a Hardship Fund award, and how much any award might be.

When making this decision we will consider:

- The shortfall between Council Tax Reduction and Council Tax liability
- The steps taken by the customer to reduce their Council Tax liability
- Changing payment methods, re-profiling Council Tax instalments or setting alternative payment arrangements to make them affordable
- To ensure that all discounts, exemptions and reductions are granted
- Steps taken by the customer to establish whether they are entitled to other welfare benefits
- Steps taken by the customer in considering and identifying where possible the most economical tariffs for supply of utilities
- If a Discretionary Housing Payment has already been awarded to meet a shortfall in rent
- The personal circumstances, age and medical circumstances (including ill health and disabilities) of the customer, their partner and any dependants and any other occupants of the customer's home
- The difficulty experienced by the customer which prohibits them from being able to meet their Council Tax liability, and the length of time this difficulty will exist
- Shortfalls due to non-dependant deductions
- The income and expenditure of the customer, their partner and any dependants or other occupants of the customer's home
- How deemed reasonable expenditure exceeds income
- That all income may be taken into account, including those which are disregarded when awarding Council Tax Reduction
- Any savings or capital that might be held by the customer or their partner

- Other debts outstanding for the customer and their partner
- Whether the customer has already accessed or is engaging for assistance with budgeting and financial/debt management advice. A Hardship Fund award may not be made until the customer has accepted assistance either from the Council or third party, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau or similar organisations, to enable them to manage their finances more effectively, including the termination of non-essential expenditure.
- The exceptional nature of the customer and/or their family's circumstances that impact on finances.
- The length of time they have lived in the property.
- The amount available in the Hardship Fund at the time of the application.

The list is not exhaustive and other relevant factors and special circumstances will be considered.

An award from the Hardship Fund does not guarantee that a further award will be made at a later date, even if the customer's circumstances have not changed.

A Hardship Fund award may be less than the difference between the Council Tax liability and the amount of Council Tax Reduction paid.

6. Publicity

North Somerset Council will publicise the Fund and will work with interested parties to achieve this. A copy of this policy will be made available for inspection and will be published on the Council's website.

7. Making a claim

Customers can apply for a Hardship Fund award by completing the online application form which can be found on our [What is council tax support and how to claim it | North Somerset Council](#). Customers can get assistance with the completion of an application from the Revenues and Benefits Service

The application form must be fully completed and supporting information or evidence provided, as reasonably requested by the Council.

In most cases the person who claims the Hardship Fund award will be the person entitled to Council Tax Reduction. However, a claim can be accepted from someone acting on another's behalf, such as an appointee, if it is considered reasonable.

8. Change of circumstances

North Somerset Council may revise an award from the Hardship Fund where the customer's circumstances have changed which either increases or reduces their Council Tax Reduction entitlement.

9. Duties of the customer

A person claiming a Hardship Fund Payment is required to:

- Give the Council such information as it may require to make a decision.
- Tell the Council of any changes in circumstances that may be relevant to their on-going claim.
- Give the Council such other information as it may require in connection with their claim.

10. Amount and duration of award

Both the amount and the duration of the award are determined at the discretion of the Council, and will be done on the basis of the evidence supplied and the circumstances of the claim.

- The start date will determined on individual circumstances of each case
- The Hardship Fund will normally be awarded for a minimum of one week
- The maximum length of the award will not exceed the end of the financial year in which the award is given

11. Payment of award

A Hardship Fund award will be made directly into the customer's Council Tax account, thus reducing the amount of Council Tax payable.

12. Overpaid Hardship Fund payments

Overpaid Hardship Fund awards will generally be recovered directly from the customers Council Tax account, thus increasing the amount of Council Tax due and payable.

13. Notification of an award

The Council will notify the outcome of each application for Exceptional Hardship Fund awards in writing. The notification will include the reason for the decision and advise the customer of their appeal rights.

14. The right of appeal

If the customer is not satisfied with the decision in respect of an application for a Hardship Fund award, a decision to reduce the amount of Hardship Fund awarded, a decision not to backdate a Hardship Fund award or a decision that there has been an overpayment of a Hardship Fund award, they must make written representation to the Council setting out their grounds of appeal.

North Somerset Council will consider the appeal and respond in writing, setting out the decision and associated reasons for the decision.

15. Fraud

North Somerset Council is committed to protect public funds and ensure funds are awarded to the people who are rightfully eligible to them.

A customer who tries to fraudulently claim a Hardship Fund award by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under The Fraud Act 2006.

Where we suspect that such a fraud may have been committed, this matter will be investigated as appropriate and may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

16. Legislation

The Local Government Finance Act 2012 amends Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and sets out the requirement for Councils to develop and adopt a localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme. This Exceptional Hardship Fund Policy forms part of this Scheme.

Cabinet

11 February 2026

Draft Minute Extract

CAB 64 Recommendation from the Library Service consultation

Councillor Solomon presented the report to members which outlined recommendations following the recent consultation on the future of the Library Service. It was noted that Option B emerged as the preferred choice among approximately 4,000 respondents. The equality impacts of the proposal had been assessed in detail and recorded. The impact assessments formed part of the report pack to members.

Councillor Solomon confirmed that the proposals ensured continued compliance with the council's statutory library duties. A correction to Appendix C was highlighted: Pill Library's opening hours should read 09:30–12:30. Councillor Solomon addressed points raised by Councillor Tristram and Mr Smart, clarifying that alternative proposals were not introduced as further options into the consultation but were considered alongside all consultation responses in forming the proposals for next steps and decisions. It was emphasised that consultation sought to elicit understanding of the impact of service withdrawal, and the process followed was compliant with the Gunning Principles.

Councillor Solomon stated that the principal reason for the proposed closure of Worle Library was the building's condition, with required works estimated at £1.44 million, a cost neither the council nor community groups could meet.

In considering the report councillors raised concerns regarding reduced opening hours at the For All Healthy Living Centre, Campus Library and Weston Central Library, particularly given the needs of more deprived communities. Members also questioned disparities in reductions between deprived and more affluent areas. Councillors welcomed ongoing discussions about community-led options in Worle but sought clearer support for such initiatives. Positive feedback was shared regarding Pill Library's retention.

Councillor Bell noted that the final decision rests with Full Council and a report would be taken to the meeting of 24 February.

Resolved: that the Cabinet recommends to Council that

1. Council considers the outcomes of the [North Somerset Library Service Transformation Consultation 2025](#) as outlined in the report and the further report to be presented to Council

2. Approves Option B, which means:
 - retaining Pill Library in the council network
 - 2. working with Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council to develop a community supported solution for Winscombe Library; closing the library by the end of March 2027 and implementing outreach services if a viable solution cannot be found.
 - 3. closing Worle Library by 7 September 2026, whilst continuing to explore and develop outreach options with the community and according to need.
 - 4. reducing opening hours across all remaining council run libraries, to be introduced from 7 September 2026 (see Appendix C)
 - 5. making a range of additional savings from the library service budget, as outlined in section 7.

and further

3. Notes the equalities impacts of implementing Option B, as outlined in Appendix D of the report
4. Notes the next steps to progressing the delivery of Option B, including the mitigations for any impacts on staff and local communities
5. Notes that implementing the recommendations in full will ensure that North Somerset Council continues to deliver a library service in accordance with its statutory duties
6. Notes that implementing the recommendations in full should ensure that the Libraries' Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings requirement is achieved in full.

North Somerset Council

Report to the Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 11th February 2026

Subject of Report: Libraries Transformation

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Councillor Solomon, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Open Spaces

Key Decision: Yes

Reason: Impacts on more than 2 wards.

1. Recommendations

This report is presented to the Cabinet to decide which option to recommend to Council from the North Somerset Library Service Transformation Consultation, which ran from 31 July to 24 October 2025.

Cabinet recommends that Council:

1. Considers the outcomes of the [North Somerset Library Service Transformation Consultation 2025](#) as outlined in this report

2. For clarity notes that, following representations made at the Cabinet meeting of 11 February 2026:

- North Somerset Council will work closely with Winscombe Ward Councillors and Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council to look at options to keep the library open in Winscombe. This could include parishes providing funding to enable North Somerset to continue to run the library service or to develop a community managed option run by volunteers.
- In Worle, North Somerset Council will continue to work with local people to support access to library services locally within the current budget and explore what could be provided with additional investment.

3. **Approves Option B**, which means:

- retaining Pill Library in the council network
- working with Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council to develop a community supported solution for Winscombe Library; closing the library by the end of March 2027 and implementing outreach services, if a viable solution cannot be found
- closing Worle Library by 7 September 2026, whilst continuing to explore and develop outreach options with the community and according to need
- reducing opening hours across all remaining council run libraries, to be introduced from 7 September 2026 (see Appendix C)

- making a range of additional savings from the library service budget, as outlined in section 7
4. Notes the equalities impacts of implementing Option B, as outlined in Appendix D
 5. Notes the next steps to progressing the delivery of Option B, including the mitigations for any impacts on staff and local communities
 6. Notes that implementing the recommendations in full will ensure that North Somerset Council continues to deliver a library service in accordance with its statutory duties
 7. Notes that implementing the recommendations in full should ensure that the Libraries' Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings requirement is achieved in full.

Reasons for recommendations

The recommendations presented for consideration have been informed by extensive community consultation and a detailed analysis of all the feedback received. This was a complex process which involved careful consideration of a significant volume of responses. The consultation and engagement methodology used, and analysis of all the consultation feedback received is provided in Appendix E.

The options put forward for consideration during the consultation were developed based on assessment and understanding of local need and initial assessments of equality impacts (for more detailed information see [North Somerset Council. Report to the Cabinet Date of Meeting: 18 June 2025 Subject of Report: Libraries transformation public consultation](#)). Details of the options presented for consultation can be found in section 5.

In making this recommendation to implement Option B the Council has considered several critical factors:

- the feedback received during the consultation (detailed analysis in Appendix E)
- that Option B emerged as the most supported proposal and reflected the views most strongly expressed during the public consultation and engagement process
- the needs of local communities (see the comprehensive range of data which formed the [initial needs analysis](#))
- the support for libraries demonstrated across North Somerset
- the impact on customers:
 - customers of Worle Library will be affected by the library closure in year 1 (2026-27)
 - impacts of the closure of the library in Worle will be mitigated by working with the community to shape an outreach offer, informed by community needs and feedback from the consultation
 - the potential closure of Winscombe Library in year 2 (2027–28) may be avoided through joint working with the local community to develop a sustainable solution
 - amendments to the proposed changes to opening hours have been made for some libraries to minimise impact, in response to consultation feedback (see Appendix C)
- widespread community support for developing an alternative solution in Winscombe:
 - a [recent survey](#), conducted by Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council, showed that 94% of residents who responded supported raising the Parish precept to retain a library in the village (see Appendix G)
 - Banwell Parish Council also expressed support for retaining a library in Winscombe, concerned about the disproportionate impact on rural residents.

In their response to the consultation, they expressed willingness to work with Winscombe Parish Council to explore community-led solutions, should the need arise

- the equality impacts that have been identified (see Appendix D)
- that implementing Option B in full will enable the Council to continue to deliver a “comprehensive and efficient” library service for all who live, work, or study in the district as required by the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act (see section 3.1 and section 8)
- compliance with other legal requirements (see section 9)
- the balance of risk
- the requirement to achieve the savings as set out in the MTFP:
 - each of the options presented for consultation, if implemented fully, would achieve the savings required
- measures identified to mitigate the impacts of changes (see section 5.6)

Cabinet is asked to note:

- the consultation outcomes and responses to the proposed options
- the overall levels of agreement and disagreement on all three of the options presented in the consultation
- that Option B received the highest level of support among respondents
- that respondents were encouraged to propose alternative ideas and solutions to help sustain services
- that the consultation was conducted in accordance with the Gunning Principles and that therefore, Cabinet must ensure that findings have been considered with an open mind and that the recommendations demonstrate how feedback has informed the proposals. If Cabinet wishes to adopt a substantially different proposal, the Council will be required to reconsult, as consultees must have the opportunity to comment on the actual proposal under consideration
- the required savings for the Library Service: a planned 19% budget reduction (£433k) are included in the Council’s approved MTFP from April 2026, to be implemented over two years
- the suggestions received as part of the consultation exercise
- the equalities implications, as detailed in the impacts assessments
- that the methodology and activity undertaken have produced recommendations that will transform the Library Service in accordance with statutory requirements, as detailed in section 8
- that if the recommendations are implemented in full and a community supported solution is not found for Winscombe Library, the revised statutory library provision will consist of 9 static libraries providing total weekly opening hours of 486.75 (261 staffed and 225.75 self-service) together with a mobile library (see Appendix C)

2. Summary of report

To present the background to the recent Library Service Transformation Consultation 2025.

To report to Cabinet the key findings from the recent Library Services Transformation Consultation.

To recommend a way forward to achieve the required level of MTFP savings, whilst enabling the Council to continue to deliver a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service, as required by the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act.

3. Details

3.1 Context

Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, North Somerset Council has a statutory duty to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service for all those who live, work, or study in the district. This duty requires the Council to deliver a service that is accessible to all residents by reasonable means, making best use of available assets while recognising the constraints on council resources. The Council must also comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act) and base its library strategy on evidence of the needs and aspirations of the district’s diverse communities. In addition, there is an expectation that libraries nationally deliver on four Universal Library Offers: Reading, Digital and Information, Culture and Creativity, and Health and Wellbeing. These offers demonstrate the role of public libraries in enriching the lives of individuals and their communities.

Libraries in North Somerset have already undergone significant transformation, including the creation of the first community-managed library, energy-efficiency upgrades, installation of technology to increase self-service opening hours, co-location with Children’s Centres, and the re-provision of some libraries through mobile and outreach services. These changes have delivered substantial benefits and contributed to financial savings of £1.4 million over the past decade.

Further transformation is considered critical to future plans. The Council aims to enhance the library offer by promoting and reinforcing facilities as accessible customer service outlets and expanding digital inclusion initiatives to increase residents’ digital knowledge and confidence.

Demand for libraries continues to evolve. The Council must ensure that services remain relevant to residents while maintaining quality and delivering value for money. Libraries are recognised as vital components of North Somerset’s local infrastructure, supporting physical and emotional wellbeing, acting as social hubs, and serving as the “shop front” for council services. They provide trusted, safe spaces at the heart of communities and are the starting point for a wide range of inclusive activities.

However, North Somerset Council faces unprecedented financial pressures across essential services. Maintaining and investing in libraries is increasingly challenging as budgets reduce. In this context, library transformation offers an opportunity to develop innovative approaches to sustain services for the future. The Council is reviewing all areas of expenditure to continue delivering services within available resources. The Library Service needs to achieve revenue savings of £433k, with £217k in 2026/27 and £217k in 2027/28. These savings need to be considered in the context of the [Libraries Strategy 2021-31](#) and impacts on NSC’s objectives and strategies. The savings will impact on library sites, opening hours and the staffing required.

Therefore, the Library Service undertook a comprehensive review and consultation to determine how best to meet community needs and continue to meet its statutory obligations within the resources available. It considered a range of delivery options to achieve the required savings and developed proposals for public consultation and engagement with local communities and stakeholders. The consultation ran for 12 weeks, from 31 July to 24 October 2025.

- Options were developed based on an assessment and understanding of local need and initial Equality Impact Assessments (including mitigations)

- The savings proposed would affect all NSC managed library sites, opening hours, and staffing.

Extensive and careful consideration has been given to all of the consultation feedback before finalising these options and recommendations. This report is presented to Cabinet to determine which options and recommendations should be approved and implemented.

3.2 Principles of the consultation options

The proposed delivery model is shaped by several general principles which have been developed with consideration given to how to use resource most effectively to deliver library services across the district. These include:

- Combining a reduction in the number of council-run libraries with a reduction in the staffed opening hours of remaining libraries
- Increasing self-service opening hours at remaining sites, where possible
- Reducing expenditure on lesser used resources and on book stock
- Reducing staffing levels, including management support and professional support
- Planning to engage with local communities (including Town & Parish Councils) to explore transfer of libraries at risk to independent community management and/or other support options
- Delivering library services in alternative ways to communities with more need and low current engagement
- Reviewing mobile library routes and stops, alongside additional investment in outreach to mitigate closures including exploring opportunities for the new mobile outreach vehicle alongside partners within North Somerset Council, such as Children's Services
- Reducing transportation costs, renegotiating leases / downsizing back-office spaces, where possible
- Increasing income generation (e.g., advertising / sponsorship, donations, social value, Friends Groups)
- Providing buildings which are as accessible to the public as possible
- Offering a broad range of library activities for all service users in line with the Libraries Strategy and other corporate strategies (see section 4)
- Providing libraries which offer welcoming spaces where the culture is front-facing, friendly, inclusive and community focused

3.3 Current Library Service Offer

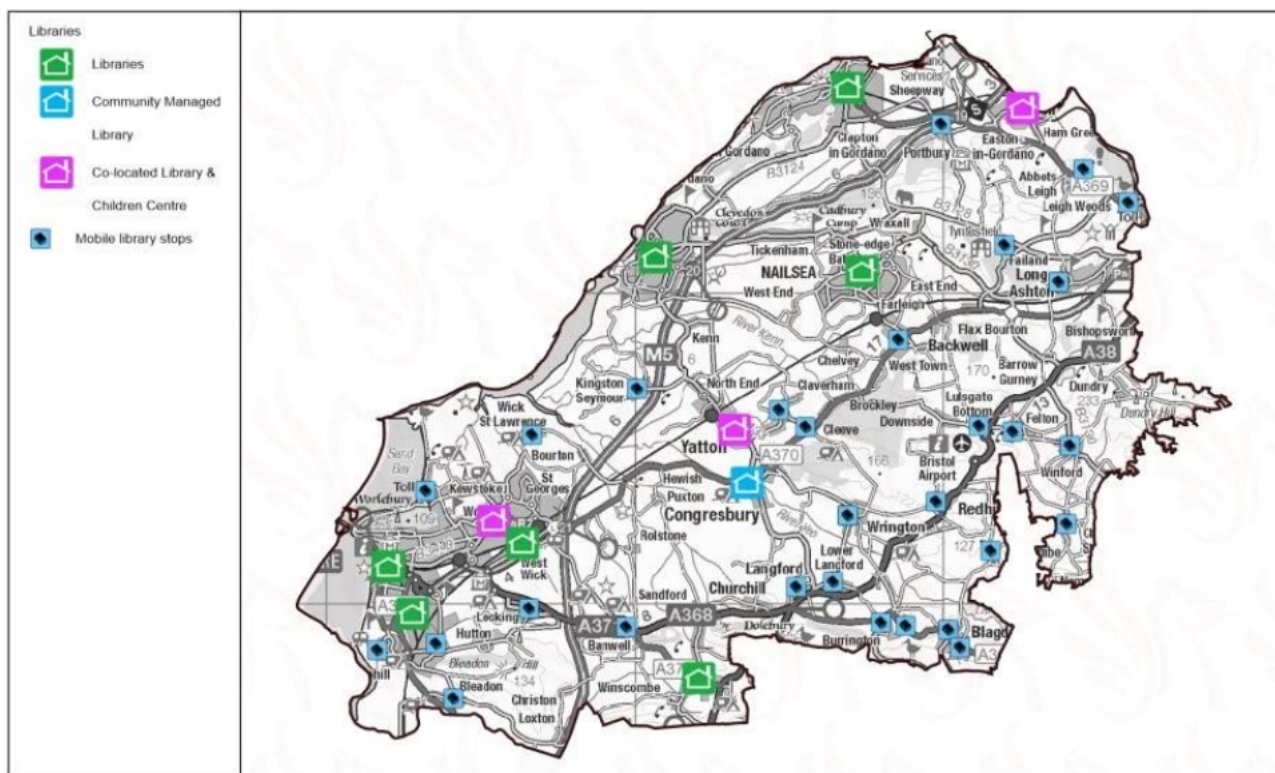


Fig. 1 Map of Current Library Locations and Mobile Stops

North Somerset Council currently delivers its statutory library services through a network of 11 static libraries located in towns and villages across the district, 10 of which are run by the Council and the other, Congresbury, is a community managed library. The service provides total weekly opening hours of 644.5 (378 staffed and 266.5 extended access), together with a mobile library service. Libraries are located in:

- Clevedon
- Congresbury
- The Campus (Locking Castle, Weston-super-Mare)
- Nailsea
- Pill – co-located with the Children's Centre
- Portishead
- Weston-super-Mare (Town Hall) - including the North Somerset Local Studies Library
- For All Healthy Living Centre, Weston-super-Mare
- Winscombe
- Worle – co-located with the Children's Centre
- Yatton – co-located with the Children's Centre

The Mobile Library (see section 3.3.1) is also part of the current statutory provision.

Further information about each library, their services and opening hours can be found [online](#).

3.3.1 Mobile Library

The North Somerset Mobile Library enables NSC to deliver statutory library services to more rural communities and other locations without static library service provision. It provides a regular service to 28 communities throughout the district, operating over a 2-week cycle (see Fig. 1, Map of Current Library locations and Mobile Stops). It also provides outreach services on an ad-hoc basis to other communities, including asylum seekers, refugees and the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community.

In March 2024 NSC's Library Service was awarded a capital grant from Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), distributed by Arts Council England (ACE), to procure a new more versatile and electric powered outreach vehicle, to replace the aging mobile library and open new delivery opportunities. The new vehicle became operational in December 2025.

The Mobile Library provides a wide range of services including:

- books and audio books to borrow
- option to reserve and collect from the 2.5 million items in [LibrariesWest](#) libraries
- free Wi-Fi access
- access to information (e.g. local, health and council services)
- access to partner information sessions and outreach activities
- events and activities

3.3.2 Self-Service facilities

All North Somerset libraries offer a range of self-service facilities, including borrowing and returning items, collecting reservations and booking computers. Some also offer self-service printing and photocopying and self-service opening hours. Library members can also access various online services through the [LibrariesWest](#) website 24/7, including library catalogue searches, placing reservations, and accessing free to use digital resources including eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines and eNewspapers. Members can also download the [LibrariesWest app](#) to manage their account, search the catalogue, renew and reserve books and more.

3.3.3 Extended Access

[Extended Access](#) is a service which enables registered customers to use the library when staff are not present. It is available at Nailsea, Portishead, Clevedon and Winscombe Libraries and Yatton and Worle Library and Children's Centres. This currently extends opening hours at these sites from 8am until 8pm seven days a week.

At Weston Library self-service access is available 3 hours per week, supported by a Concierge. The Concierge offers customers support for general and directional enquiries and security issues.

3.3.4 Home Library Service

A volunteer-delivered Home Library Service, co-ordinated by a member of the library team, is provided to residents who are unable to access libraries independently, including those in care homes, with ill health or with caring responsibilities. Volunteers select and deliver books to registered customers once a month and return the books to the library.

3.3.5 Service to those in care homes

Anyone living in nursing, residential or sheltered accommodation in North Somerset can access free library services. Services offered include book deliveries to individuals, providing personalised reading choices, group reminiscence activities and shared reading sessions for groups.

3.3.6 Digital Library Services

A range of digital library services, available 24 hours a day, supplements and extends the physical offer, reaching residents who might not otherwise benefit from libraries. This includes access to eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines and eNewspapers. Details are available on the [LibrariesWest](#) website.

3.3.7 Outreach Services

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

- [Home Library Service](#)
- [Care Home Library Service](#)
- [Mobile Library Service](#) – see also *Fig. 1 Map of Current Library Locations and Mobile Stops*
- Activities for pre-school aged children (story times and rhyme times) in community locations
- Delivery of the annual [Summer Reading Challenge](#) for primary school aged children, in community locations
- Group [reminiscence sessions](#) for older people and those living with Dementia
- Group shared reading sessions
- Digital skills sessions

3.3.8 Events & Activities

Libraries deliver a range of events and activities, in support of the service's strategic aims: reading and culture; digital, information and skills; health and wellbeing; community spaces, accessible to all; and climate emergency.

3.3.9 Library staff

At the end of June 2025, NSC Library Service employed a total of 39.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. This comprised 4.9 FTE 'professional' posts (i.e., posts for those holding a formal qualification in librarianship, or equivalent experience) and 34.7 FTE 'other' posts. These posts were held by 69 members of staff. This figure excludes the Campus Library, which has no dedicated library staffing and is funded separately. It also excludes the team of 18 zero hours 'library pool' staff, who provide regular cover for annual leave and sickness.

3.3.10 Volunteers

Volunteers are integral to North Somerset Library Service, supporting activities such as class visits, digital skills, family history, and community events. Opportunities include roles in the Home Library Service, reminiscence sessions, story times, and coding clubs, as well as placements for young people through the Duke of Edinburgh Award, internships, and work experience. In 2023–24, 311 volunteers contributed 6,965 hours to the service.

3.3.11 LibrariesWest partnership

North Somerset library members benefit significantly from membership of the [LibrariesWest](#) partnership of seven local authorities, which enables customers to use over 145 libraries across the southwest and borrow from over 2.5 million items, as well as delivering service efficiencies to the Council. Further details of the partnership and the benefits of membership are given in Appendix B.

3.3.12 The Universal Library Offers

Developed by [Libraries Connected](#), the [Universal Library Offers](#) set out the core services all libraries provide. They offer a framework for a consistent, high-quality service across the UK while allowing flexibility to meet local needs. The Offers focus on four key areas: Culture and Creativity, Health and Wellbeing, Information and Digital, and Reading. A guide to the offers is set out in Figure 2.

Culture and Creativity	Enabling local communities to enjoy high-quality arts and cultural experiences through libraries.
Health and Wellbeing	Supporting the health and wellbeing of communities through services that inform, engage, and connect.
Information and Digital	Ensuring communities can access quality information and digital services, learn new digital skills, and feel safe online.
Reading	Building a literate and confident society by developing, delivering, and promoting creative reading activities in libraries.

Fig. 2 Libraries Connected Universal Offers

3.4 North Somerset Libraries Strategy 2021-2031

The [North Somerset Libraries Strategy 2021-2031](#) provides the framework for delivering a modern, sustainable library service that meets community needs. It emphasises making best use of resources, adopting innovative approaches, and exploring alternative delivery models.

The strategy sets four key objectives:

- **Reading, Literacy & Culture** – Promote reading for pleasure, provide access to diverse books, and deliver cultural events and activities
- **Digital, Information & Skills** – Improve digital inclusion, support access to online services, and offer learning opportunities including STEM
- **Health & Wellbeing** – Reduce isolation, promote health literacy, and provide safe spaces for social and cultural engagement
- **Community Places Accessible to All** – Ensure libraries remain safe, inclusive hubs, enable access to council and partner services, and involve communities in shaping provision

Progress is monitored through an annual action plan aligned with corporate priorities.

3.5 Performance and data

3.5.1 Usage trends

Library membership is increasing. Since the end of March 2022 membership has risen by 50% (from 32,229 in March 2022 to 48,473 at the end of April 2025). The general picture is that visitor numbers have remained steady over the last two years, following an upward trend post-removal of Covid-19 restrictions. Notably, annual visits to Weston Library increased by 43% over the previous year with over 109k visits made. This is largely attributed to a slower recovery from pandemic restrictions than other locations, to the launch of the face-to-face Council support service and an increase in activities offered. Yatton Library also saw an increase in footfall over the previous year. The exception to the trend was use of the Mobile Library service, which decreased by 40% over the previous year. This was due to significant service disruption following repeated mechanical issues with the vehicle, which was retired during the year. A replacement Mobile Library was launched in December 2025, along with a new timetable and opportunities for more flexible delivery and joint working with partners (see section 3.3.1). With a programme of promotional activity planned, the usage should rise during 2026.

The statistics show however that issues of books and other materials fell over the last year in North Somerset libraries, although there have been exceptions on some months of the year, when activity has increased. Use of the eBooks service, on the other hand, continues to rise reflecting a significant shift in how library users access content. Between March 2022 and March 2025, digital downloads increased by 146%, demonstrating a strong and sustained growth in demand for online resources. This trend highlights how libraries are successfully adapting to evolving consumer preferences by expanding digital collections, improving access platforms, and ensuring that services remain relevant in an increasingly digital world. The statistics also show that attendance at events and activities has risen indicating that people are using libraries for a wide range of reasons in addition to book lending. A summary of activity is shown in Figure 3. More usage data is available in Appendix A.

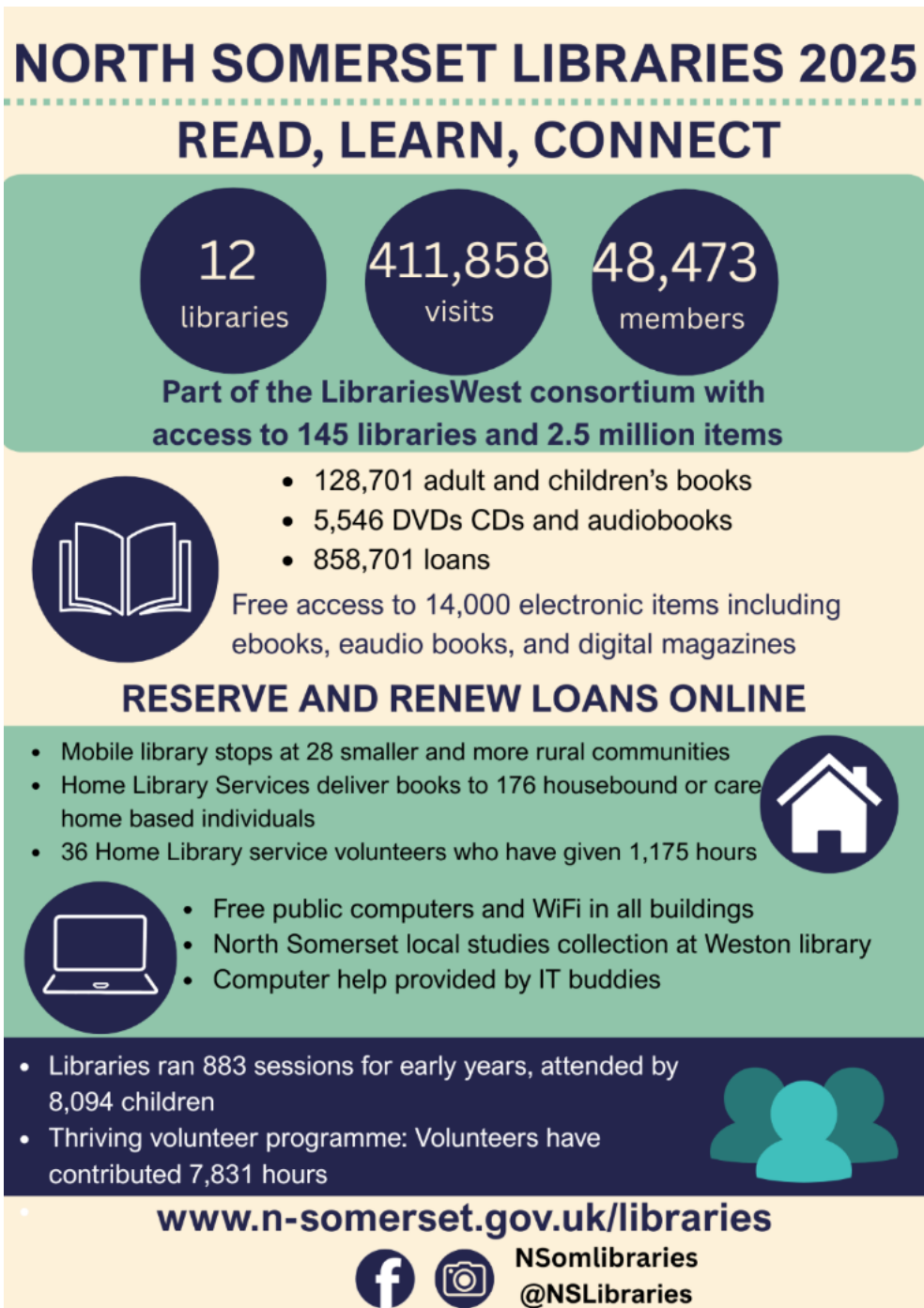


Fig. 3 Summary of Library Activity

3.5.2 Benchmarking data

The level of library opening hours and number of library branches in North Somerset compared to the other six members of the LibrariesWest consortium are shown in Appendix F. This shows that, should the recommendations be implemented in full, once self-service opening hours are taken into consideration, North Somerset will have more total opening hours than Bath and North East Somerset and approximately half of South Gloucestershire (who lack mobile library provision). It will, however, have the lowest number of staffed opening hours in the consortium.

4. Policy

4.1 This transformation programme proposes changes to the ways library services are delivered in response to a reduction in resources from 2026-28, whilst ensuring that NSC continues to deliver its statutory duty to provide 'comprehensive and efficient' library services to those living, working, and studying in the area. The proposals and subsequent recommendations were based on analysis and assessment of local needs and a consideration of the Council's legal obligations, for example, under The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

4.2 As well as national policy and legislation, there are several council strategies which directly interface with the delivery of North Somerset Library Services:

- [North Somerset Libraries Strategy 2021-31](#)
- [Digital Technology Strategy 2025-29](#)
- [Customer Experience Strategy 2025-29](#)
- [NSC Productivity Plan](#)
- [Corporate plan](#)
- [Heritage, Arts and Culture Strategy 2020-30](#)
- [Rural Strategy](#)
- [Climate Emergency Strategy](#)
- [The Local Devolution Programme](#)

5. Details

5.1 The case for transformation

The consultation set out a range of options for a widespread public consultation and engagement exercise with local communities and stakeholders which ran for 12-weeks from 31 July - 24 October 2025. A separate survey for children and young people also ran concurrently. Full details of the options presented can be found in Appendix E and are summarised below.

The consultation ran for 12 weeks (31 July - 24 October 2025) and was open to all. Responses were gathered through:

- **Online submissions via e-Consult** (the council's online engagement platform)
- **Paper questionnaires** available in libraries or by post
- **Email and postal correspondence** from individuals and organisations
- **Public drop-in events** held at libraries and community venues
- **Children's survey** designed specifically for younger participants

Promotion and engagement

The consultation was promoted widely to maximise reach and accessibility. Activity included:

- **Online channels** such as the council website, social media, and email newsletters
- **Offline channels** including posters, flyers, and local press coverage
- **Targeted communications** to key stakeholders (e.g. town and parish councils, community groups)
- **Outreach** through equalities networks and children's services to support diverse participation

5.2 Development of a new delivery model

The operating model for achieving the objectives of library transformation and vision is predicated on the following key elements:

- Changes to the service offer – an increase to operations via self-service, the development of an outreach programme of delivery
- Staffing review and re-design
- Service review
- Income generation

The consultation responses have been analysed and reviewed to develop recommendations for change, considering how better use can be made of the existing resources to meet the needs of North Somerset's residents (see below). The recommendations for a remodelled service are based on our understanding of the needs of our communities. Research has included looking at demand, local need, usage, demographics, the condition of buildings and resident feedback to date. The evidence base includes:

- Analysis of 4,403 responses to the consultation
- Analysis of the 500 responses to the children and young people's survey
- Other responses to the consultation (including letters and e-mails)
- Ward profiles, including Index of Multiple Deprivation score
- Equality sample data by site
- Building / Asset information – e.g., Leasehold / Freehold; meeting rooms / space for hire
- Financial / budget overview by site
- Co-located services and number of organisations/departments using library space to provide a service, per site
- Site service information: opening hours (staffed and extended access / self-service); items issued and renewed p.a., visits p.a., including extended access; number of library members who borrowed from the library within the last year; use of public computers hours p.a.; number of printouts p.a.; total events hosted / numbers engaged p.a.
- Membership by library location by home postcode
- Digital members by postcode
- The modes of transport available to travel to libraries
- Number of partner organisations using the premises to deliver events and activities

A summary of the options consulted on is shown below.

OPTION A
○ Local communities would be offered the opportunity to manage libraries with the lowest usage in Winscombe and Pill, with the potential to remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services ○ If no viable community-led solutions were found Winscombe and Pill libraries would close ○ Worle Library - due to anticipated costs of repair and maintenance the library could no longer operate from this venue. The community were invited to help shape the offer locally ○ There would be a reduction in opening hours across the remaining council-run libraries ○ There would be savings from central budgets, including spending on new books and digital resources

- Where libraries closed, access to library services will be offered in other ways to address local need

OPTION B

- The local community were offered the opportunity to manage Winscombe Library, with the potential to remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solutions were found Winscombe Library would close.
- Worle Library - due to anticipated costs of repair and maintenance the library would no longer operate from this venue. The community were invited to help shape the offer locally
- Pill Library would remain part of the North Somerset Library network
- There would be a reduction in opening hours across the remaining council-run libraries
- There would be savings from central budgets, including spending on new books and digital resources
- An additional £10,000 savings would be required on top of those for Option A from the new books and digital resources budget
- The For All Healthy Living Centre library would close on Mondays when usage was lowest
- Where libraries closed, access to library services will be offered in other ways to address local need

OPTION C

- The local community were offered the opportunity to manage Pill Library, with the potential to remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solutions were found Pill Library would close.
- Worle Library - due to anticipated costs of repair and maintenance the library would no longer operate from this venue. The community were invited to help shape the offer locally
- Winscombe Library would remain part of the North Somerset Library network
- There would be a reduction in opening hours across the remaining council-run libraries
- There would be savings from central budgets, including spending on new books and digital resources
- An additional £10,000 savings would be required on top of those for Option A from the new books and digital resources budget
- The For All Healthy Living Centre library would close on Mondays when usage was lowest
- Where libraries closed, access to library services will be offered in other ways to address local need

5.3 Key Consultation Findings

A total of 4,912 responses were received to the consultation: 4,403 via e-Consult and paper, 500 children's survey and 9 emails and letters. The following headline findings are taken from the Executive Summary of Appendix E – 'Future of Library Services in North Somerset: Consultation Summary Report, January 2026'.

5.3.1 Views on the proposals

The consultation responses clearly highlight how much library services are valued by residents, who regard them as essential community assets offering a wide range of benefits. While there is strong recognition of the importance of libraries, the consultation also highlighted an understanding among some communities of the financial challenges facing NSC and the need to deliver services differently.

- Option B received the highest level of agreement (48.0% agreed, 27.0% neither agreed nor disagreed, 25.0% disagreed), followed by Option A (43% agreed, 23.0% neutral, 34.0% disagreed) and Option C (41.0% agreed, 27.0% neutral, 32.0% disagreed) (see Fig. 4 below)
- None of the options achieved majority support, and around 1,000 respondents did not provide a response to whether they agreed or disagreed with any of the options.
- Free-text comments focused more on the overall proposals than on specific options, with strong concern about closures and reduced staffed hours
- Only a very small minority supported closures; others favoured reduced hours or suggested alternative savings and income-generation ideas
- For Pill, respondents highlighted the impact that closure would have on low-income families, who rely on having a free, local library within easy reach. Many also stressed that Pill Library is a well-used community space, and its loss would remove an important place for children, families, and residents to meet, learn, and access support
- For Winscombe and Worle, respondents were concerned about the possibility of their local library closing and the barriers this would create. People commonly highlighted the difficulty of travelling to alternative libraries, limited public transport options, and the impact on older residents, families, and those who rely on having a library within easy reach

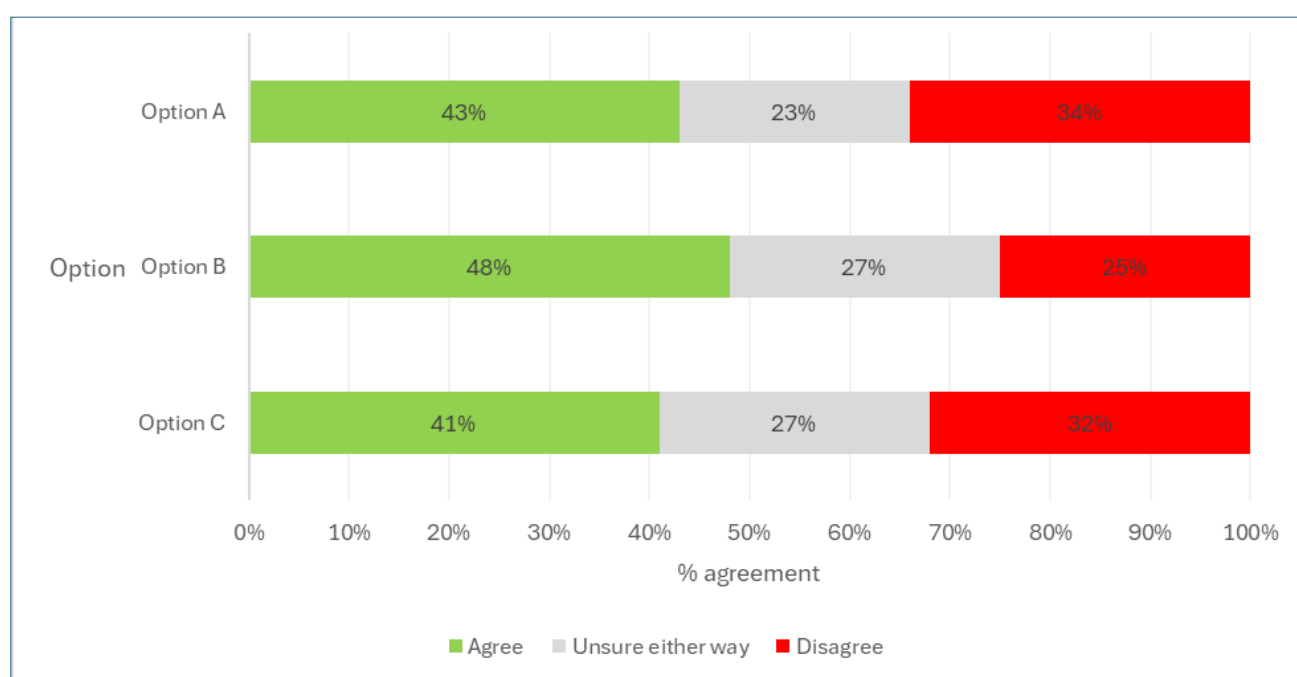


Fig. 4 Level of agreement for each of the 3 options presented in the consultation

5.3.2 How people use libraries

- Most respondents (92.7%) were North Somerset residents, with high participation from Pill, Winscombe, Clevedon, Portishead, and parts of Weston-super-Mare
- Respondents were highly engaged users: nearly three-quarters (74.7%) visit weekly or monthly
- Libraries were described as supporting people throughout their lives - from early reading and homework support to study space, digital access, and social connection
- Most visits take place during staffed hours (83.1%), and many respondents praised the support and welcome provided by library staff

5.3.3 Children's survey findings

Children emphasised the importance of free book borrowing (93.8%), and 89.6% said closures would make it harder for them to borrow books. Many described libraries as safe, enjoyable places to read, learn, and spend time. Most simply said they did not want their library to close, often explaining that they would feel sad and that they enjoy going to the library.

5.3.4 Perceived impacts

Personal impact was mixed, but community impact was a dominant theme. Respondents expressed strong concern about potential closures. Commonly cited impacts included:

- Loss of space for clubs, groups, and regular activities (reading groups, ESOL cafés, coding clubs, social meet-ups)
- Reduced access to books, study space, and digital resources, particularly affecting those without alternatives at home
- Negative effects on children's literacy, confidence, and participation in activities such as the Summer Reading Challenge
- Impacts on digital inclusion, especially for residents reliant on library computers and support
- Increased travel time and cost, particularly for rural residents and those without private transport
- Loss of safe, welcoming spaces used by vulnerable groups, including older people and those seeking social connection

Comments frequently highlighted the impact on children, emphasising early literacy, confidence, and the importance of free access to books and activities - especially for families without resources at home. Many also spoke about the legacy value of libraries, used across generations and expected to benefit future ones.

5.3.5 Community involvement

- While respondents recognised the council's financial pressures, most opposed closures. They encouraged the council to prioritise reduced staffed hours, extended access, and income-generation options before considering the withdrawal of local provision.
- Interest in community-managed libraries was mixed. While a small minority (13.0%) said they would consider supporting such a model, most preferred libraries to remain council-run. Comments typically focused on whether a community-managed approach could be maintained in the long term, the pressure it would place on volunteers, and the risk of unequal provision if some communities were better placed than others to take on this responsibility.

5.3.6 Equalities and consultation limitations

Equalities monitoring showed overrepresentation of older residents and underrepresentation of younger residents and minority ethnic groups. As with all voluntary consultations, findings reflect the views of those who chose to participate. Geographic variation in engagement and gaps in demographic data should be considered when interpreting the results. Further details on equality implications can be found in section 11.

5.3.7 Income Generation

Various opportunities to enhance income generation within the Library Service were identified through the consultation process (see Appendix E). The most suggested income-generation idea was hiring out space within library buildings. Other typical suggestions included advertising, developing partnerships with local organisations, and modest charges for certain services. This workstream will be treated as a priority and implementation will commence in Year 1 to ensure early progress.

5.4 Staff engagement

Initial engagement about the needs for service transformation and NSC's financial challenge has already commenced with staff, taking the form of online and in-person meetings, newsletter articles, and emails communications. Trade unions have been engaged and made aware of the need to transform the service and the potential impact on staffing. Pending a decision in February 2026, a staff consultation is planned to commence in March 2026, with new staffing structures implemented from 7 September 2026.

5.5 Staffing Considerations

Service transformation and re-design will require changes to the existing staff structure and a restructuring of the staff team. These changes will be based on the following principles:

- Managing the programme over two years to minimise the need for compulsory redundancies
- Streamlining management arrangements
- Continuing to support apprenticeships to better reflect the demographics of our local community and offer routes into employment
- Expanding the range of work experience opportunities to support local communities and skills development
- Continuing to support and develop community volunteering opportunities
- Vacancy management

5.6 Mitigations and opportunities

5.6.1 Winscombe Library

The Council will work closely with Winscombe Parish Council to identify practical and sustainable options for retaining the library. Engagement during the consultation has indicated that there is a high level of support locally for retaining a library in the community and for supporting this financially. This collaborative approach will include exploring alternative service delivery models and / or funding models, supported by the joint development of a comprehensive business case using our Local Devolution framework. The business case will set out the evidence, costs, benefits, and risks associated with each option to ensure decisions are robust, transparent, and aligned with community needs and long-term sustainability.

5.6.2 Outreach and library services in Worle

In Worle (and in Winscombe, should the library close) outreach activities will be offered to ensure that the statutory service continues to be delivered. The offer will be developed based on the community needs identified through the consultation process and local opportunities that have been identified. The Council will continue to work with stakeholders and the community in Worle to develop this work.

This may include:

- Providing 'Order & Collect' services at identified community locations
- Enabling book returns at community locations
- Providing 'honesty library' collections of books at community locations
- Providing activities for young people and their families
- Facilitating digital skills development
- Promoting services available digitally, including free eBooks, eAudiobooks, eNewspapers and eMagazines, as well as the library app
- Promoting existing outreach activities (see section 3.3.7)
- Promoting Home Library services to people unable to access libraries independently
- Promoting volunteering opportunities to support the Home Library service
- Promoting travel links to nearby libraries

5.6.3 Opening hours

Where staffed opening hours are reduced as an outcome of the review, the following will be implemented where possible (and subject to risk assessment):

- Increased self-service / [Extended Access](#) opening hours
- Introduction of self-service opening hours at the Campus and For All Healthy Living Centre libraries
- Increased promotion of self-service opportunities
- Development of online [Extended Access](#) inductions, to increase accessibility to those unable to attend in library opening hours
- Promotion of alternative nearby library services and details of how to access them
- Investment in Wi-Fi printing technology to enable customers to print from mobile devices without staff present

Details of the revised opening hours are set out in Appendix C.

5.6.4 Greater community involvement

Consultation responses highlighted strong interest in increased community participation in service delivery, particularly in Pill, where residents established the [Friends of Pill Library group](#). The Council welcomes this enthusiasm and is committed to working in partnership with local communities to help libraries thrive. We will actively engage with individuals and groups who have expressed an interest in volunteering and develop a structured action plan to support and coordinate these opportunities.

This should help ensure that:

- community contributions are integral to the future of library services
- communities are empowered to help shape and support their library services.
- help ensure that library services reflect and respond to community needs
- help sustain service delivery

The ongoing impact of decisions and mitigations will be reviewed to ensure effective use of resource for those affected by the changes.

6. Timescales for delivery

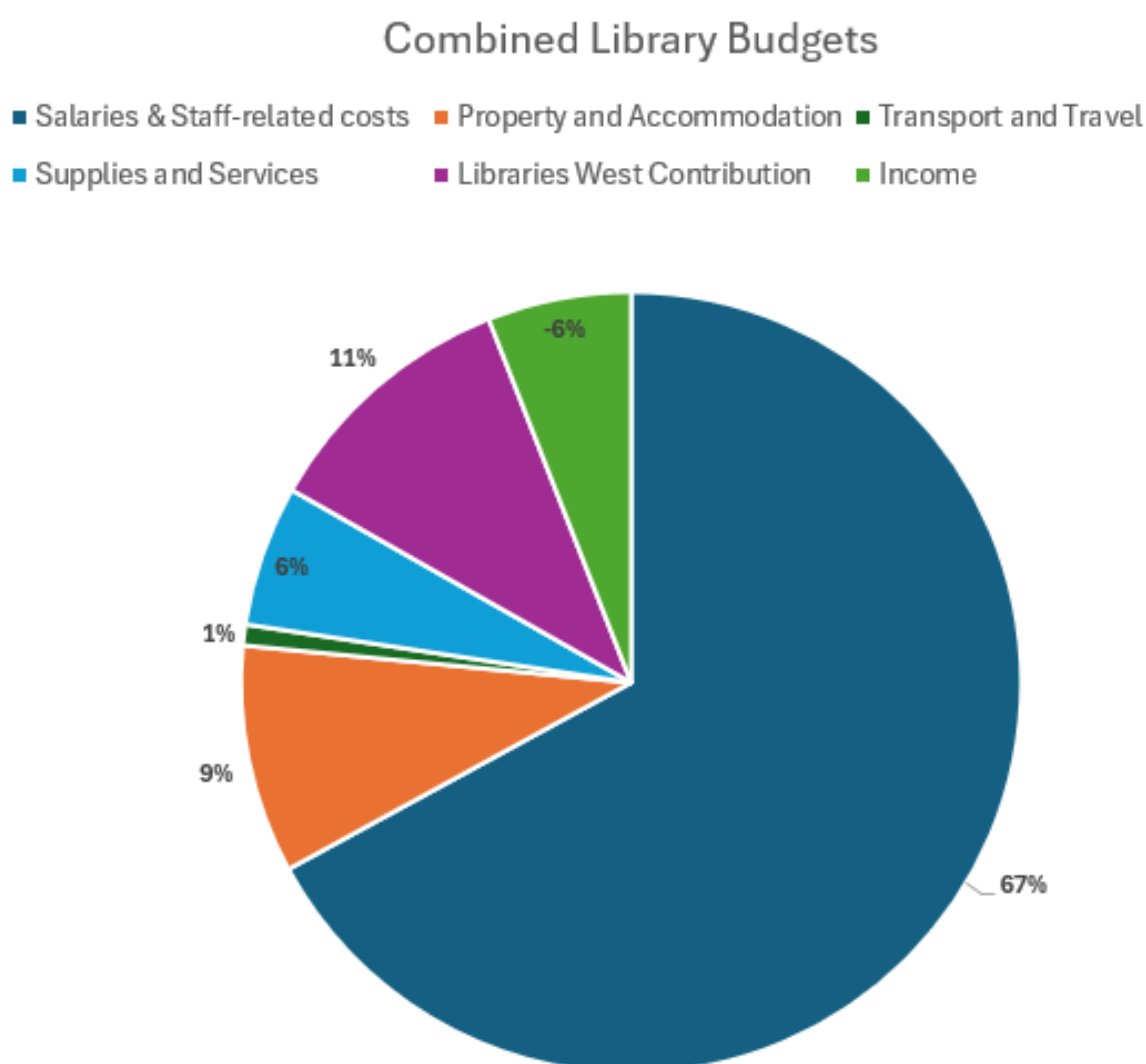
6.1 Pending a decision in February 2026 the timeline for delivery and next steps is shown in section 14.

6.2 The timeline is tight but currently on track. Any delays in sign off or approval to go forward will result in consequent delays to decision making, implementation and realisation of benefits for residents, and achievement of the savings required. Project management resources also need to be secured to deliver the changes.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Combined Library Budgets – current costs to deliver the service

The Library Service revenue budget for 2025-26 is shown in Figure 5 and Table 1.



Combined Library Budgets (%)

Table 1 - All library budgets combined (2025-26)

Salaries & Staff-related costs	1,713,568

Property and Accommodation	241,382
Transport and Travel	22,060
Supplies and Services	148,778
Libraries West Contribution (includes book spending)	276,960
Income	-152,066
Net Revenue Budget 2025-26	2,250,682

7.2 Savings requirement

The Library Service was originally required to deliver savings of £465,000 from its annual revenue budget and this sum was included within the medium-term financial plan (MTFP). A saving of £32,000 was achieved in the financial year 2024–25, leaving an outstanding requirement of £433,000 to be delivered.

This saving is currently phased for delivery across two financial years meaning that £217,000 must be delivered in the 2026–27 financial year, with a further £217,000 in 2027–28.

These savings are expected to be realised through the implementation of the review outcomes, subject to Cabinet approval of the recommendations in full.

7.3 One-off costs associated with the Library Review

Costs associated with the Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement Exercise include the following.

- A specialist consultant was engaged to provide advice, prepare the report, and develop consultation materials, offering external expertise and challenge. The cost of this work was up to a value of £5,700 and was funded from the Council's transformation budget.
- Additional costs were incurred for consultation communication materials (including printing), venue hire, and the facilitation of stakeholder meetings. These costs were one-off and were funded through the library's revenue budget. Final figures were still being confirmed at the time of reporting.
- Project team officer costs were met from existing revenue budgets.

7.4. Savings identified in Option B

Table 2 sets out the savings which would be achieved if Option B were implemented as per the recommendations in this report and the phasing of those savings.

Total savings of £433,000 are anticipated across the years 2026-27 and 2027-28. Income generation is anticipated to increase by £41,500 across the two years. An additional investment of up to £26,300 will be made in outreach services to deliver against the mitigations outlined in this report. The budget for outreach will be reduced if a community solution is found to enable Winscombe Library to be retained within the statutory network.

Table 2 - Savings identified in Option B

Site changes	Total	Year 1	Year 2 (Winscombe community supported)	Year 2 (Winscombe closes)
Transfer / close Winscombe Library	£27,800	£0	£27,800	£27,800
Close Worle Library and Children's Centre	£56,800	£33,000	£23,800	£23,800
Subtotal: site changes	£84,600	£33,000	£51,600	£51,600
Reduction in opening hours				
North Somerset Studies Library - reduce by 2.5 days per week	£15,900			
For All Healthy Living Centre Library - reduce by 11.5 hours per week	£44,000			
Weston-super-Mare Library - reduce by 8.5 hours per week	£32,800			
Nailsea Library - reduce by 1.5 hrs hours per week	£4,700			
Clevedon Library - reduce by 0.5 hours per week	£1,800			
Yatton Library - reduce by 0.5 hours per week	£1,200			
Portishead Library - reduce by 0.5 hours per week	£1,800			
Pill Library – reduce by 0.5 hours per week	£600			
Subtotal: Reduction in opening hours	£102,800	£60,000	£42,800	£42,800
Other staffing savings				
Reduce central staffing and management budgets	£121,200	£55,000		
Delete posts currently held vacant	£42,100	£42,100		
Subtotal – Other staff savings	£163,300	£97,100	£66,200	£66,200
Miscellaneous savings				
Reduce systems maintenance	£3,500			
Reduce spending on library books and e-resources	£30,500			
Delete unused stationery and equipment budgets	£33,000			

Subtotal – Miscellaneous savings	£67,000	£34,600	£32,400	£32,400
Sub-total savings	£417,700	£217,000	£193,000	£193,000
Increased income generation	£41,500	£0	£41,500	£41,500
Investment - increased outreach activities	-£26,300	-£7,700	-£5,400	-£18,500
Total savings anticipated for Option B 2026 to 2028	£432,900	£217,000	£229,100*	£216,000**

* The over achievement of saving is invested back into the service to offset impacts of the changes.

** £1,000 shortfall on paper due to rounding of figures.

8. Legal Powers and Implications

8.1 The report sets out the proposals arising from the Council's review of its library services. Section 7 (1) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (PLMA) provides that it shall be the duty of every library authority, in this case the Council, to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof....”.

The duty applies to those who live, work or study full time in the authority's area. Section 7 (2) provides that, in fulfilling this duty, a library authority shall in particular have regard to the desirability –

- “(a) of securing, by keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, and pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children; and
- (b) of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it; and
- (c) of securing, in relation to any matter concerning the functions both of the library authority as such and any other authority whose functions are exercisable within the library area, that there is full co-operation between the persons engaged in carrying out those functions.”

8.2 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has produced a non-statutory guidance for local authorities considering library service provision and titled [‘Libraries as a statutory service’](#). The guidance includes the following:

....Every council in England is required to provide a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service under the Act. It must do so in a way which meets the needs of local library users taking into account the resources available.

The public library service is not a national service, but a local service. What a comprehensive and efficient service means will differ between councils and will depend on the needs of each area. It is therefore the role of councillors and officials at a local level to

determine how much they spend on libraries and how they manage and deliver their service. This must be done:

- in consultation with their communities
- through analysis of evidence around local needs
- in accordance with their statutory duties

Councillors need to make decisions about how money is invested in the interests of the whole community. They will have competing priorities across a wide portfolio of local service provision, and councillors and officers must reconcile these matters against the background of their legal requirements. Councils can take their available resources into account when deciding how to deliver their public library service.

Councils therefore have the freedom to design their library service, based on their analysis and assessment of local needs. There are no longer prescribed national standards, which risked ignoring the specific circumstances or needs of individual library authorities....”

8.3 The guidance encourages local authorities considering changes to their library service to: a) inform the DCMS Libraries team about their proposals before public engagement or consultation; b) demonstrate plans to consult with local communities alongside an assessment of their needs (including any projections of need), consider range of options (including alternative financing, governance or delivery models) to sustain library service provision in their area and a rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of their proposals; c) evidence that proposals would continue to meet local needs and should engage with the community when designing the library service to meet local needs within the available resources; d) an assessment of the equality impact on all ‘protected groups’ as specified in the Equality Act 2010 and e) consider the use of the council’s scrutiny process to better inform decision making.

8.4 The Council has a duty to consult with library users, residents, communities and other stakeholders that are likely to be affected by the proposals for the provision of library services in the borough. The consultation must take place at a time when the proposals are still at their formative stages. The Council must provide the consultees with sufficient information to enable them properly to understand the proposals being consulted upon and to express a view in relation to it. The information must be clear, concise, and accurate. The consultees must be given adequate time to consider the proposals and to respond. The Council must give genuine and conscientious consideration to the responses received from the consultees during the consultation before making its final decision on the proposals. The responses to consultation should be reviewed when finalising any proposal and an explanation given of how these responses have informed the proposal.

8.5 As part of its decision-making process on the proposals, the Council must have “due regard” to its equalities’ duties. Under Section 149 Equality Act 2010, the Council in exercise of its function to provide library service, must have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it in order to tackle prejudice and promote understanding. The protected characteristics are age, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Council is required to give serious, substantive, and advance consideration of what (if any) the proposals would have on the protected group and what mitigating factors can be put in place. This exercise must be carried out with rigour and an open mind and should not be a mere form of box ticking. These are mandatory considerations. Locally, North Somerset agreed a Motion at Council

in January 2025⁴ that Care Experience should also be treated as if it were a protected characteristic. Therefore, the consultation specifically included engagement with care experienced people.

9. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

9.1 The impacts of the changes as indicated by the responses from the consultation are:

- A reduction in the number of sites could increase the number of car journeys, and therefore carbon emissions, to access library services.
- A reduction in the ability of people to access library books, either through decreased opening hours, reduced book purchasing budget or library closures, could result in more people buying rather than borrowing books.

10. Risk Management

Risk	Inherent risk	Mitigating / exploiting actions	Residual calculation	Residual risk
Risk of legal challenge/Judicial review	HIGH	Ongoing engagement with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. External consultancy support/advice to review the findings and recommendations.	MEDHIGH	MEDHIGH
It may not be possible to achieve the savings target	HIGH	Seek to find the savings, identify multiple options and opportunities for income generation etc. whilst still providing the statutory service requirements. Savings could be phased across the two years.	MED	MED
Lack of officer resource to deliver a large change programme	HIGH	Senior management to discuss and agree resource for the programme. Budget will need to be identified for this. Discuss with project sponsor and finance business partner once the options have been clarified.	MEDHIGH	MEDHIGH
Costs of implementing changes/closures/mothballing sites etc. haven't been factored into the savings	HIGH	Budget will need to be identified for this. Discuss with project sponsor and finance business partner once the options have been clarified. Careful planning of changes, resources and implementation to minimise interim costs with the sites. Engagement with Property and Projects team for any site changes.	MED	MED
Reputational damage	HIGH	External consultancy support/advice to review the proposed consultation documentation. Communications plan development and delivery. Clarity and consistency about budget situation and that no decisions have been made. Ongoing engagement and briefings with NSC councillors and Town and Parish Councils. Recommendations in the Cabinet report are primarily based on analysis and feedback from the public consultation.	MED	MED
Impact on library staff	HIGH	Communicate and consult with the staff teams and unions throughout the process and explain timescales. Invite feedback and dialogue with staff. Changes will not be implemented until the HR consultation concludes in 2026.	MEDHIGH	MEDHIGH

11. Equality Implications

Libraries need to transform for the reasons outlined above. Understanding of the implications of libraries service changes on equalities groups is critical.

11.1 The Equalities Act

The Equalities Act 2010 (Section 149) sets out public sector duties; the general duties are to have due regard to the need for:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

A full set of Equality Impact Assessment have been developed and are available in Appendix D. It is essential that the findings and recommendations outlined in this report are read and understood in conjunction with these and before Cabinet completes the decision-making process.

11.2 Equalities Monitoring Information in the consultation questionnaire

Equalities monitoring information was an optional section of the consultation questionnaire and the information provided by respondents highlights how participation varied across different demographic groups and helps identify whether different groups of people are being reached and treated fairly. The findings should be considered with this data in mind.

Equalities monitoring showed overrepresentation of older residents and underrepresentation of younger residents and minority ethnic groups. Voluntary consultations, findings reflect the views of those who chose to participate. Geographic variation in engagement and gaps in demographic data should be considered when interpreting the results.

Appendix E– ‘Future of Library Services in North Somerset: Consultation Summary Report, January 2026’ provides a detailed breakdown of all responses. A summary is provided below.

11.2.1 Age

A total of 2,899 respondents (66.0% of all respondents) provided their age. The age profile of respondents was weighted towards older residents. Younger residents were significantly under-represented: only 1.4% of respondents were under 20, compared with 17.6% of the North Somerset population (Census 2021) ¹. Middle-aged groups (35 - 54) made up 31.5% of responses, broadly in line with local demographics. Older residents were over-represented, with nearly 60.0% of respondents aged 55+, compared with 23.9% of the local population aged 65+.

11.2.2 Sex

Of the 4,403 respondents, 2,797 (64.0%) provided their sex.

Table 3 - Sex profile of respondents

Sex	Number	% of those who gave their sex
Male	881	31.5%
Female	1,916	68.5%

11.2.3 Ethnicity

Of the 4,403 respondents, 2,797 (64%) provided their ethnicity. The majority of respondents (93.3%) identified as English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British, broadly reflecting the local population (96.0% White, Census 2021) ². People from minority ethnic backgrounds

¹ Based on 2021 Census data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), ‘Census 2021: Population and household estimates, North Somerset’. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

² ^[1] Based on 2021 Census data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), ‘Census 2021: Population and household estimates, North Somerset’. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

were represented in small numbers, accounting for less than 3.0% of responses compared with around 4.0% of the local population. Perspectives from minority ethnic groups are present but limited due to low response numbers.

11.2.4 Health & disability

A total of 2,898 respondents (66.0%) provided information about whether they have a physical or mental health condition lasting 12 months or more that affects their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Overall, 20.4% of respondents reported a condition that affects their daily activities, which is broadly in line with Census 2021³ data for North Somerset (19.7%). The proportion of respondents reporting that their condition affects them “a lot” (6.0%) is slightly lower than the local population figure (9.1%). The consultation includes a range of experiences from people with long-term health conditions, though responses from those whose conditions affect them most strongly are somewhat fewer in number.

11.2.5 Language Profile

A total of 1,901 respondents (43.0%) provided information about the language(s) they speak and read. The majority of respondents (94.8%) reported English as their first language. A small proportion (1.4%) reported that English is not their first language, and 3.1% said they speak English very well even though it is not their first language. The overall profile is broadly in line with Census 2021⁴ data for North Somerset, although people whose first language is not English appear to be slightly under-represented.

11.2.6 Residence

A total of 3,872 respondents (88.0%) provided a postcode that could be matched to a ward within North Somerset. The highest numbers of responses came from Pill (9.7%), Banwell and Winscombe (7.7%), and Portishead West (5.7%). Other wards with notable engagement included Yatton (5.2%), Weston-super-Mare Kewstoke (4.9%), and Gordano Valley (4.3%). Smaller numbers of responses were received from rural wards such as Blagdon and Churchill (1.2%), Wick St Lawrence and St Georges (1.2%), and Winford (0.7%). A small number of respondents (0.6%) provided postcodes outside North Somerset. When compared with Census 2021⁵, engagement varied across the area. Overall, the consultation achieved strong engagement across North Somerset, with particularly high participation in Pill, Banwell and Winscombe, and Portishead.

11.2.7 Barriers to Accessing Library Services

Respondents were invited to describe any additional factors that make it harder for them to access or use library services. Feedback covered a broad range of personal circumstances and practical considerations. Many respondents highlighted the value of libraries as

³ Based on 2021 Census data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), ‘Census 2021: Population and household estimates, North Somerset’. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

⁴ ^[1] Based on 2021 Census data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), ‘Census 2021: Population and household estimates, North Somerset’. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

⁵ ^[1] Based on 2021 Census data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), ‘Census 2021: Population and household estimates, North Somerset’. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

welcoming, staffed spaces, and described how different aspects of service design can influence their ability to use them. Common themes included:

- **Physical access:** some respondents noted that mobility difficulties, reliance on public transport, parking costs, or uneven pavements and ramps can make travel to and from libraries more challenging
- **Digital access and confidence:** several respondents said they feel less confident using online systems or self-service technology. They emphasised the value of in-person support, particularly for those who are less familiar with digital tools.
- **Neurodiversity:** while libraries were often described as calm and supportive environments, some respondents mentioned that sensory factors, such as noise or lighting can affect their experience
- **Language and communication:** a small number of respondents whose first language is not English said they sometimes find written information difficult to understand and appreciate support from staff and conversation groups
- **Financial pressures:** some respondents noted that the cost of travel, parking or limited household budgets can influence how often they are able to visit a library
- **Awareness of services:** several respondents said they were not aware of certain services, such as extended-access hours or digital resources, and suggested clearer communication
- **Opening hours and staffing:** some respondents with work or caring responsibilities said that limited opening times can make it harder for them to visit. Others highlighted the value of staff presence for guidance and reassurance.
- **Social and wellbeing needs:** several respondents described libraries as important community spaces that offer routine, connection, and a place to study or relax

Additional suggestions included creating sensory-friendly spaces, strengthening engagement with schools and young people, improving communication about available services, and ensuring resources and displays reflect a broad range of interests. Some respondents also noted that access to computers and the internet at libraries is important for those who do not have these at home. Respondents also highlighted opportunities to support access further, particularly through clear communication, consideration of different needs, and the continued availability of staffed spaces.

The feedback gathered through the consultation will be incorporated, as far as practicable, into the design of new library services and the review of existing provision. It will be disseminated across the Library Service and shared with relevant partners to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the needs of different resident groups. Specific examples of how this feedback is informing service development include:

- **Opening hours:** insights regarding the impact of proposed changes to staffed hours have been reflected in the recommendations
- **Digital inclusion:** feedback highlighting the importance of support for digital skills will shape future activity programmes
- **Extended Access:** comments from working residents about difficulties attending in-person induction sessions have identified a need to develop of an online alternative to improve accessibility, which will be taken forward.

- **Partnerships and Volunteer Opportunities:** Numerous offers of support for libraries were received through the consultation process, reflecting a strong willingness within the community to contribute to sustaining and enhancing services. These opportunities will be explored in partnership with local stakeholders to strengthen the role of libraries as inclusive, community-focused spaces

12. Corporate Implications

The Libraries Team worked closely with colleagues in Corporate Services and the Environment, Assets and Transport Services Directorate, including communications, consultation, and customer service colleagues to ensure that the consultation was delivered in a co-ordinated way.

There are a number of relevant corporate considerations in the delivery of these recommendations, including the impact on services required to support the change and transformation such as Human Resources, Project Management, Property and Projects, IT, Legal, Marketing and Communications as well as resources from within the libraries team.

Libraries have links with many teams in the Council and changes to library services will impact many. This includes teams who deliver services alongside libraries, in library premises and where libraries deliver to their strategic objectives (see section 4.2). Examples include Children's Services, Community Venues, Customer Services, Economy, Climate, Public Health, Planning and Waste Teams. The Library Service will continue to work alongside each of these teams to mitigate changes agreed and to seek to minimise impacts for residents.

13. Options Considered

13.1 Do nothing. The Council has declared a financial emergency: this option is not feasible as transformation is required to achieve the £433k revenue savings target included in the Council's MTFP and helps ensure that we continue to deliver sustainable services with our communities.

13.2 Consider alternative service delivery models. The project team has been monitoring proposals for the transformation of, and changes, to library services nationwide, and is continually scanning the wider environment for service models that could be appropriate for NSC's Library Service. Whilst models and approaches vary from local authority to local authority there remain similarities of models (where libraries are not being closed) to use utilise opportunities to co-locate or integrate services alongside each other or with partners.

Several local authorities have transferred their library services to an independent organisation to run and manage. The legal form of these independent organisations varies, they include private limited companies with charitable status, independent mutual societies owned by staff and community members and charitable community benefit societies. Current examples include [Libraries Unlimited](#) (Devon & Torbay); [Explore York](#); and [Inspire Culture](#) (Nottingham). [Explore York](#) and [Inspire Culture](#) provide other services (e.g. archives, schools library service, adult education) in addition to libraries as part of their contracts with the relevant local authorities. DCMS has produced a toolkit for local authorities exploring alternative delivery models⁹. The LGA have also produced information on how councils and their partners are [delivering cultural services using different delivery models](#) and a series of [library case studies on different delivery models](#).

Members of the project team have considered this option but are of the opinion that it is not suitable for the NSC's Library Service for the following reasons:

- NSC's Library Service is already part of a well-established wider library consortium of 7 local authorities - [LibrariesWest](#). This consortium works well and brings significant financial and operational benefits to the service through procurement, economies of scale, technology, and operating procedures. Further details about the [LibrariesWest](#) consortium are available in Appendix B
- Several library services that were 'spun out' of local authority control have been (or are in the process of being) brought back 'in house' for a range of contractual and financial reasons. These include Suffolk, Peterborough, Northumberland, and Wigan
- There is a concern that outsourcing library services to an external body would reduce the ability for libraries to deliver against NSC's corporate objectives
- There are likely to be significant costs involved in establishing a new organisation and supporting the 'spin out' process
- The statutory responsibility for the provision of the library service remains with the local authority

13.3 Transfer to a Trust model. This option was rejected (see section 13.2).

13.4 Consider adopting either Option A or Option C as presented in the consultation. These options were rejected in favour of option B for the reasons outlined in section 1 of this report.

13.5 Consider adopting an alternative outline proposal put forward as a response post-consultation by two ward councillors which proposed larger cuts to opening hours at all sites, in order to retain Pill and Winscombe libraries. This option was considered alongside all of the other feedback submitted in the consultation. However, it was not taken forward, as implementing it would require significant additional modelling to assess its feasibility and, if found viable, would necessitate a further public consultation.

14. Next steps and timelines

Pending a decision by Cabinet and Full Council about the recommendations outlined in this report an indicative timeline for next steps is set out in Table 4:

Table 4 – Decision and implementation timeline

Indicative dates	Action or activity
11 February 2026 Cabinet	Approve fully developed proposal informed by consultation
24 February 2026 Council	Approve fully developed proposal informed by consultation
March 2026	Staff consultation around restructure commences
April 2026	Reduction in budgets identified for year 1 (see section 8.4.1)
July - September 2026	Full public engagement about the changes

Autumn 2026	Decision about future provision in Winscombe
w/b 7 September 2026	Implement new staffing structure, opening hours, outreach programme and closure of Worle Library
End March 2027	Winscombe Library - transfer to potential community model / closure
April 2027	Implement remaining changes to achieve year 2 savings (see section 7)

Author: Emma Wellard
Head of Libraries and Community

Appendices

North Somerset library service transformation consultation 2025 | North Somerset Council

Appendix	Document
A	Library user data
B	The LibrariesWest offer
C	Changes to opening hours to be implemented from 7 September 2026 (<i>if recommendations are accepted</i>)
D	Equality Impact Assessments
E	<i>Future of Library Services in North Somerset: Consultation Summary Report, January 2026.</i>
F	Benchmarking data for LibrariesWest consortium members
G	Minutes of an Extra-Ordinary meeting of Winscombe Parish Council, 20 th October 2025 including the results of Sandford and Winscombe Parish Council Library Closure Survey.

Background Papers

- [North Somerset Libraries Strategy 2021-31](#)
- Executive papers from [4 February 2025](#), including the MTFP update (pages 27-260) Libraries – explore a new delivery model including reducing the number of library sites and exploring outreach and mobile delivery’ (Directorate Reference PD08), included in the [Update on the council’s MTFP and Revenue Budget for 2025/26](#) to the Executive on 4 December 2024
- [North Somerset Council. Report to the Cabinet Date of Meeting: 18 June 2025 Subject of Report: Libraries transformation public consultation](#)

Appendices

Appendix A – Library Usage Data, May 2024 to April 2025	1
Appendix B – The LibrariesWest offer	2
Appendix C – Proposed changes to opening hours to be implemented from 7 September 2026 (if recommendations are accepted)	6
Campus Library opening times.....	7
Clevedon Library opening times	7
Congresbury Library opening times	8
For All Healthy Living Centre Library opening times	9
Nailsea Library opening times	11
North Somerset Studies Library opening times (within Weston Library)	13
Pill Library opening times	14
Portishead Library opening times.....	15
Weston Library opening times	17
Winscombe Library opening times	19
Worle Library opening times.....	21
Yatton Library opening times.....	22
Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments – see separate document	24
Appendix E - Future of Library Services in North Somerset: Consultation Summary Report, January 2026 – see separate document	25
Appendix F - Benchmarking data for LibrariesWest consortium members	26
Appendix G - Minutes of an Extra-Ordinary meeting of Winscombe Parish Council, 20th October 2025 including the results of Sandford and Winscombe Parish Council Library Closure Survey.	28

Appendix A – Library Usage Data, May 2024 to April 2025

Library usage data, May 2024-Apr 2025									
Library	Hours open per week (staffed)	Total hours open per week - staffed and self-service	Items issued and renewed (per annum)	Visits (per annum) including extended access	No. of library members who used the library within the last year (includes loans/renewals only)	Use of public computers (hrs per annum)	No. of printouts (per annum)	Total events hosted 24-25	No. of attendances recorded, (representing instances of participation rather than unique individuals)
Campus	67	67	46,697	71,088	2,388	3,002	14,156	28	
Clevedon	28.25	84	97,908	48,154	3,623	3,759	10,733	535	6,627
Congresbury Community Managed Library	9.5	9.5	5848	3694	333	54	79	n/a	
For All Healthy Living Centre	37.5	37.5	9,657	27,951	644	1,220	3,632	670	2,843
Nailsea Library	34.5	84	109,425	54,839	5,079	2,556	13,740	341	3,241
Pill	16.5	16.5	10,368	5,840	430	142	278	107	1,177
Portishead	33.5	84	113,660	60,742	4,558	2,815	14,360	765	7,635
Weston-super-Mare	49	46.5	82,905	109,116	5,361	14,999	54,616	595	5,039
Winscombe	17	84	20,655	8,929	973	148	830	33	73
Worle	26	64.5	37,374	21,316	1,373	1,043	4,259	296	2,345
Yatton	26	84	44,723	33,407	1,772	1,301	4,465	497	6,465
Mobile	17.25	17.25	29,492	4,463	782	N/A	N/A	135	

Appendix B – The LibrariesWest offer

1. Background

LibrariesWest is a Partnership Consortium of 7 public library authorities in the South-West of England which was initially established in 1996. Over the years, it has achieved significant economic and service benefits in the operational areas of library systems provision & technical support and the acquisition & management of physical and electronic stock. In 2005, the original Foursite Consortium (Somerset, Bath & North-East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire) was joined by Bristol City Council. Then in 2015, Dorset and Poole (subsequently Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole) joined LibrariesWest to give it the shape it has today.

Since 2019 Somerset has entered joint procurements with both Plymouth and Gloucestershire Library Authorities for e-materials and currently provides a joint platform with Plymouth for e-magazines & e-newspapers, and with Gloucestershire for e--books and e-audio books.

LibrariesWest is the longest established public library consortium in the UK and is recognised as a beacon of good practice. It continues to be a partnership of which Somerset is the lead Authority and is not an individual legal entity.

2. Facts & figures

- LibrariesWest serves a growing resident population of more than 2.5 million through a network of 162 static libraries (including community partnership libraries) and 3 mobile libraries
- The shared catalogue contains approximately 2.5 million items
- Around 9 million items are loaned from our libraries each year

3. Governance

Somerset Council is the lead authority and procures and manages supply contracts on behalf of the consortium. A contractual agreement is in place between Somerset and each of the partner authorities for the delivery of support services, in particular the Library Management System (LMS). The Consortium is managed by the LibrariesWest Board which meets around 4 times a year and comprises the Head of Service from each partner Authority. Each Authority has a vote in key decision-making processes. The Consortium aims to operate at a strategic level and is keen to realise further efficiencies by extending joint working arrangements.

4. Charging mechanism

As the lead authority, Somerset recovers the full cost of the joint services it supplies to the Consortium from the Partner Authorities, including itself. Economies of scale mean that the cost of providing joint services is less than the cost of individual Authorities providing the services, for instance, Somerset employs 2 FTE systems team to manage the Library Management System and associated services, and individual Authorities do not need to employ anyone to do this work.

Shared charges are calculated using a formula based on actual population size. Where actual costs per Authority can be identified, for example print to post services, parcels, delivery mileage and time, actual costs are charged.

5. Expansion

Somerset Libraries is interested in opening dialogue with any Authorities which might be interested in joining the Consortium. As outlined in point 1, we currently offer different ways of working together, short of full Consortium membership, to encourage wider collaboration, joint working and sharing of resources to save costs and improve customer service.

6. Benefits of membership

Each Authority is different and following an approach from a potential partner, key LibrariesWest staff would 'sit down' with a prospective partner and look at the different services which could potentially be of interest and evaluate how the potential benefits could be realised for both parties. Key benefits that we envisage new authorities would realise by joining the Consortium are outlined below:

Core membership

6.1 Efficiency savings because of the joint procurement and delivery of a shared Library Management System (LMS), including ongoing support costs and the support of a dedicated LMS IT technical team

6.2 Access to a shared catalogue and the stock of all partner authorities

6.3 Inter lending of all loanable materials, improving access for library members. LibrariesWest has a mechanism in place to compensate partner authorities for potential loss of income when inter lending chargeable materials and for any significant net lending of books.

6.4 Single library card for all members, which in practice means members can borrow, return, renew and reserve items using any library in the consortium

6.5 A recognisable brand, with a logo to reflect the shared offer

6.6 A shared public facing web presence (www.librarieswest.org.uk) and app to promote the services of LibrariesWest and allow customers to access services 24/7

6.7 The benefit of joining the longest established public library consortium in the UK, with a track record of excellence and experience, which is committed to customer service and innovation in service delivery.

6.8 Shared digital contracts, for e books, e audio books, e newspapers and e magazines, enabling Partner Authorities to share set up and hosting costs, procurement and legal fees, and offer an increased number and range of titles than may be affordable for a single authority.

Options beyond core membership

6.9 Efficiency savings because of the joint procurement, contract management, acquisition, processing and delivery of library materials (books etc.), including the support of a dedicated Bibliographic Services team

6.10 Added value services e.g. the planning and delivery of shared training and promotions, shared marketing initiatives, the ability to share best practice within the consortium and to share in joint bids for national funding.

6.11 Access to a shared facility for cross-authority communication, document sharing and management.

Stock management

6.12 Contract management for the supply of stock, and the setting up and management of supplier selection and standing orders.

6.13 The selection, ordering and cataloguing of all stock and dealing with invoices, using either the same LMS as the existing members or a different LMS.

6.14 Setting up and management of direct delivery of stock.

6.15 Handling of inter library loan requests.

6.16 Van delivery service. To facilitate the movement of stock across the Consortium area, a combination of LibrariesWest and Authority vehicles are currently used.

LMS Support

6.17 LMS technical support and helpdesk facility.

This includes a range of options from 'one-off' support on a consultancy basis e.g.

LMS implementation / upgrade to full support (i.e. LMS support and contract management).

7. Consultancy

LibrariesWest offers a consultancy service in 2 areas

7.1 Consortium working

We offer the benefit of almost 30 years' experience of operating as a public library consortium, including establishing and growing a consortium, legal compliance and selling the benefits to decision makers and customers.

7.2. Procurement

We offer the benefit of our experience of drafting a comprehensive tender document, writing an LMS specification and carrying out a joint procurement exercise with the benefits of our lessons learnt. We also offer the benefit of our experience in specifying for and procuring other library materials (e.g. AV, e books) as a consortium.

7.3. LMS 'one off' consultancy

If you wish to explore either of these options further, please contact Emma and Jon (details below) and we can discuss your needs.

Contact

Emma Mercer, Service Manager: LibrariesWest & Bibliographic Services

emma.mercer@somerset.gov.uk

Jon Scown, Development Officer: LibrariesWest - jon.scown@somerset.gov.uk

01278 454624

Appendix C – Proposed changes to opening hours to be implemented from 7 September 2026 (if recommendations are accepted)

Campus Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	9.30am-8pm	9.30am-6pm*
Tue	9.30am-8pm	9.30am-6pm*
Wed	9.30am-8pm	9.30am-6pm*
Thu	9.30am-8pm	9.30am-6pm*
Fri	9.30am-8pm	9.30am-7pm*
Sat	9.30am-5pm	9.30am-2pm*
Sun	10am-5pm	10am-2pm*
Total:	67 staffed hours	52 staffed hours* Self-service opening – hours to be confirmed

Difference

Reduction of 15 staffed hours.

Comments

Retained 3 hours of proposed reduction following feedback about retaining longer weekend opening hours and one late night opening. We are committed to introducing facilities to allow customers self-service access to The Campus library – aim to have an initial solution by September 2026 (exact date tbc).

Clevedon Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Tue	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-10am* self-service 10am-5pm* staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Wed	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Thu	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Fri	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Sat	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15-8pm self-service
Sun	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Total:	26 staffed hours 57 self-service hours	25.5 staffed hours 57.5 self-service hours

Difference

Reduction of 0.5 staffed hours, increase of 0.5 self-service hours.

Congresbury Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours

Mon	2-4.30pm	2-4.30pm
Tue	Closed	Closed
Wed	10am-12.30pm	10am-12.30pm
Thu	Closed	Closed
Fri	2-4.30pm	2-4.30pm
Sat	10am-midday	10am-midday
Sun	Closed	Closed
Total:	9.5 staffed hours	9.5 staffed hours

Difference

No change.

For All Healthy Living Centre Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	9.30am-5pm	9.30am-12.30pm* 1.30-5pm*
Tue	9.30am-5pm	Closed*†
Wed	9.30am-5pm	9.30am-12.30pm* 1.30-5pm*
Thu	9.30am-5pm	9.30am-12.30pm* 1.30-5pm*
Fri	9.30am-5pm	9.30am-12.30pm* 1.30-5pm*
Sat	Closed	Closed
Sun	Closed	Closed
Total:	37.5 staffed hours (closed 12.30-1.30pm during school holidays)	26 staffed hours*

† self-service to be explored

Difference

Reduction of 11.5 staffed hours.

Comments

Based on recent footfall data, closing on Tuesday rather than Monday is recommended.

We will explore the feasibility of offering self-service during lunchtimes and on the proposed closed day.

We will also explore use of library space by Family Hubs.

Nailsea Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Tue	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-6pm staffed 6.15-8pm self-service	8-10.00am self-service 10am-5pm* staffed 5.15-8pm* self-service
Wed	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Thu	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Fri	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Sat	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15-8pm self-service
Sun	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Total:	34.5 staffed hours 48.25 self-service hours	33 staffed hours* 49.75 self-service hours*

Difference

Reduction of 1.5 staffed hours, increase of 1.5 self-service hours.

Comments

Rather than reducing Saturday hours, it is recommended that Nailsea library opens from 10am to 5pm on Tuesdays.

North Somerset Studies Library opening times (within Weston Library)

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	10am-4pm	10am-4pm
Tue	10am-4pm	10am-4pm
Wed	10am-4pm	Closed*
Thu	10am-4pm	10am-4pm
Fri	10am-4pm	Closed*
Sat	10am-4pm	10am-1pm*
Sun	Closed	Closed
Total:	36 staffed hours	21 staffed hours*

Difference

Reduction of 15 staffed hours.

Comments

Retained 0.5 hours of proposed reduction following feedback. We will investigate options for self-service hours with limited facilities, while encouraging customers to book appointments during staffed hours for services requiring staff support.

Pill Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	Closed	Closed
Tue	9.30am-12.30pm, 1.30-5pm	9.30am-12.30pm, 1.30-5pm
Wed	Closed	Closed
Thu	Closed	Closed
Fri	9.30am-12.30pm, 1.30-5pm	9.30am-12.30pm, 1.30-5pm
Sat	9.30am-1pm	9.30am-12.30pm*
Sun	Closed	Closed
Total:	16.5 staffed hours	16 staffed hours*

Difference

Reduction of 0.5 staffed hours.

Comments

Adjustment to Saturday opening hours based on feedback.

Portishead Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Tue	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Wed	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Thu	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-10am* self-service 10am-5pm* staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Fri	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Sat	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15-8pm self-service
Sun	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Total:	33.5 staffed hours 49.25 self-service hours	33 staffed hours* 49.75 self-service hours*

Difference

Reduction of 0.5 staffed hours, increase of 0.5 self-service hours.

Comments

Feedback suggests retaining the 1pm Saturday closing time but opening 30 minutes later on Thursdays instead.

Weston Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-6pm staffed	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-6pm staffed
Tue	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-6pm staffed	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-4.30pm staffed 4.30-6pm self-service
Wed	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-6pm staffed	9-10am self-service 10am-4.30pm staffed 4.30-6pm self-service
Thu	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-6pm staffed	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-4.30pm staffed 4.30-6pm self-service
Fri	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-6pm staffed	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-4.30pm staffed 4.30-6pm self-service
Sat	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-4pm staffed	9-9.30am self-service 9.30am-2pm staffed 2-4pm self-service
Sun	Closed	Closed
Total:	49 staffed hours 3 self-service hours	40.5 staffed hours 11.5 self-service hours

Difference

Reduction of 8.5 staffed hours, increase of 8.5 self-service hours.

Comments

Introduce additional self-service from 4.30-6pm Tuesday to Friday and 2-4pm on Saturdays, pending risk assessment and agreement with partners.

Winscombe Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Tue	8-9.30am, 12.45-1.30pm self-service 9.30*am-12.30pm, 1.30-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	8-10am* , 12.45-1.30pm self-service 10am-12.30pm* , 1.30-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Wed	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Thu	12.45-1.30pm self-service 10am-12.30pm, 1.30-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	12.45-1.30pm self-service 10am-12.30pm, 1.30-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service
Fri	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Sat	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15-8pm self-service	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15-8pm self-service
Sun	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Total:	16 staffed hours 64.75 self-service	15.5 staffed hours* 65.25 self-service*

Difference

Reduction of 0.5 staffed hours on a Tuesday morning, increase of 0.5 self-service hours.

Comments

Minor reduction in opening hours of 0.5 to align with Pill Library. We will be working with Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council to develop a community supported

solution for Winscombe Library; closing the library by the end of March 2027, if a viable solution cannot be found.

Worle Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	Closed*
Tue	8-9.30am self-service 9.30*am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	Closed*
Wed	5.15-8pm self-service	Closed*
Thu	5.15-8pm self-service	Closed*
Fri	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15-8pm self-service	Closed*
Sat	8-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15-8pm self-service	Closed*
Sun	8am-8pm self-service	Closed*
Total:	26 staffed hours 38.5 self-service hours	Close library from September 2026 (date tbc)

Difference

Close library from September 2026 (date tbc).

Reduction in 26 staffed hours and 38.5 self-service hours.

Yatton Library opening times

	Current staffed hours	Revised staffed hours
Mon	8am-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15pm-8pm self-service	8am-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15pm-8pm self-service
Tue	8am-9.30am* self-service 9.30am*-5pm staffed 5.15pm-8pm self-service	8am-10am* self-service 10am-5pm* staffed 5.15pm-8pm self-service
Wed	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Thu	8am-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15pm-8pm self-service	8am-9.30am self-service 9.30am-5pm staffed 5.15pm-8pm self-service
Fri	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Sat	8am-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15pm-8pm self-service	8am-9.30am self-service 9.30am-1pm staffed 1.15pm-8pm self-service
Sun	8am-8pm self-service	8am-8pm self-service
Total:	26 staffed hours 57 self-service hours	25.5 staffed hours* 57.5 self-service hours*

Difference

Reduction of 0.5 staffed hours, increase of 0.5 self-service hours.

Comments

Adjustment to Saturday opening hours has been considered following customer feedback. Rather than reducing Saturday hours, it is recommended that Yatton library opens 30 minutes later on Tuesdays.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments – *see separate document*

Appendix E - Future of Library Services in North Somerset:
Consultation Summary Report, January 2026 – ***see separate document***

Appendix F - Benchmarking data for LibrariesWest consortium members

The table below sets out some benchmarking data for the seven members of the LibrariesWest consortium: Bath & North East Somerset; Bristol; Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole; Dorset; North Somerset; Somerset; South Gloucestershire.

The data is taken from the [Libraries Basic Dataset 2023](#) published by Arts Council England.

Library Service	Number of libraries	Total no. of opening hours per week	Total no. of opening hours per week (staffed)	Mobile Library Service	Automated system to enable unstaffed library opening.
Bath & North East Somerset	3 x local authority run libraries 8 x community run libraries 3 x independent community run libraries	398	358	Yes	Yes, operating at 1 community run library.
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole	24 x local authority run libraries	927.5	927.5	No	No
Bristol	27 x local authority run libraries	847.5	723.5	No	Yes, operating at 3 libraries.
Dorset	24 x local authority ¹ 8 x community run libraries	753.5	753.5	No	Yes, operating at 1 library with 3 libraries set to be introduced. ²
North Somerset (current)	11 x local authority run libraries 1 x community run library	644.5 *** <i>Excludes North Somerset Studies Library opening hours</i>	378	Yes	Yes, operating at 6 libraries.
North Somerset (assuming recommendations are implemented in full)	9 x local authority run libraries 1 x community run library <i>1 x potential community run library (depending on outcomes of discussions in Winscombe)</i>	513.8 *** <i>Excludes potential opening hours at Winscombe should community</i>	293.5 <i>Excludes potential opening hours at Winscombe should community</i>	Yes	Yes, operating at 4 libraries. Potential additional installation at Campus Library, depending on risk assessment

¹ Note Dorset has 31 libraries listed on its website

² Information taken from Dorset libraries website as not included in data set.

		<i>support be secured</i> <i>Excludes North Somerset Studies Library opening hours</i>	<i>support be secured</i>		<i>Potential to retain at Winscombe Library, depending on outcome of discussions in Winscombe</i>
Somerset	20 x local authority run libraries 13 x community run libraries	926.5	845.5	Yes	Yes, operating at 1 library.
South Gloucestershire	14 x local authority run libraries 4 x community run libraries	1010.5	374.5	No	Yes, operating at 12 libraries

Definitions

Local authority run: Funded, run and managed by local authority staff (can be augmented by unpaid volunteers)

Community run: Run by a community group or voluntary sector organisation. It will have some level of ongoing support from a local authority or commissioned service. Will work according to a joint agreement such as a Service Level Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding or contract. Staff are volunteers, but some form of support is available. It may or may not be counted as part of the statutory service.

Independent Community run: Library that has been transferred outside the local authority network to the management of a non-local authority body. The body could be either a community group or third party. It will not be part of the statutory service.

Appendix G - Minutes of an Extra-Ordinary meeting of Winscombe Parish Council, 20th October 2025 including the results of Sandford and Winscombe Parish Council Library Closure Survey.



An Extra-Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council was held on Monday 20th October 2025, 7.30pm, Winscombe Community Centre

Those present at the meeting:

Parish Cllrs Present: Archie Forbes (Chair), Simon Crew, Laurence Heaven, Kevin Joyce (Vice-Chair), Alan Noble, Lynne Stephens (Vice-Chair), Barbara Smart, Jack Taviner, Paul Watkins, and John Witcher.

North Somerset Cllr: Joe Tristram

Parish Council Staff: Lynne Rampton (Clerk)

Members of the public: Three

Parish Cllrs Absent: Zak Aravantinos, Mark Boddy, Tom Nicholson, and Larry van Haaren,

92. **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO APPROVE REASONS FOR ABSENCE WHERE APPROPRIATE** (Agenda item 1) Apologies had been received from Cllrs Boddy, and Van Haaren.

93. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** (Agenda item 2). There were none

94. **TO CONSIDER & DECIDE UPON ANY REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION FROM MEMBERS TO ALLOW THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN A DISCUSSION OR VOTE ON A MATTER IN WHICH HE/SHE MAY HAVE A DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY OR NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST** (Agenda item 3).

Dispensations are granted to Parish Councillors under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011, and the Parish Council delegated the power to grant dispensations (s101 of the Local Government Act 1972) to the Clerk or appointed Deputy (see PC meeting 23.07.12 min 52 iv.). None

95. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE EXTRA-ORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 29TH SEPTEMBER 2025** (Agenda item 4)

Resolved: That the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 29th September 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (7 in favour, with 3 abstentions due to absence).
The minutes of the meeting would be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

96. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Agenda item 5)

With no members of the public wishing to address the meeting, there was none.

97. NSC Libraries Consultation – to consider and comment to NSC on consultation documents. Option B of the consultation proposals include closure of the Winscombe library with the local community offered the opportunity to manage the library, and with the potential to remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. (Agenda item 6)

NSC Consultation

North Somerset Council has a legal duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service for all those who “live, work or study and want to access the service.” • This includes lending books and other materials to both adults and children, free of charge to those who live, work or study in the area.

NSC has been facing financial pressures for some time, and savings of £433,000 are needed from the library budget. Closure of the Winscombe library would amount to a saving of around £28,000 pa.

Should the Winscombe library close “access to library services would be offered (by NSC) in other ways to address local need”. This would likely be a mobile van service on a weekly/fortnightly basis.

Parish Council public consultation meeting and survey

Notes from the public meeting had been circulated to members in advance of this meeting.

422 public responses had been received to the on-line and hard copy consultation, of which 94% of respondents were in favour of the parish council taking measures to save the current library service in the parish, and to increase the parish precept accordingly. A number of potential volunteers had also been identified as part of this process.

Documents requested and questions raised (or to be raised) by the Parish Council, but unanswered to date by NSC:

- A building condition report had been requested – this may include the possible presence of asbestos?
- Would the current building be leased to the parish council, or would the asset be transferred?
- Should the library be transferred on a lease to the parish council, could a break-clause be added at say year 3?
- TUPE – how may this apply to staff and current contractors?
- Would NSC retain income received from ‘overdue books’, hire charges and photocopying, potentially increasing annual running costs to the parish council by £2,500?
- ‘Additional services’ are listed in the site info pack. Costs for these services, including IT facilities and infrastructure, book stock and other resources, cleaning and insurance, are funded centrally. Would this continue, or need to be funded by the parish council in addition to other costs identified?
- S106 monies – are there any payments due to the Winscombe library that could be allocated to the pc should they take on this service? What will happen to future library contributions from developments in the parish?
- **Precept Timing** – The proposed changes are scheduled for implementation in September 2026. Although the NSC Executive Committee is not expected to make a formal decision regarding the closure of Winscombe Library until February 2026—following the conclusion of the public consultation in October 2025—an early indication of the likely outcome would be appreciated. This would enable the parish council to consider and potentially allocate funding for any associated costs in the 2026–27 financial year.

Key Points Supporting the Continued Funding of Winscombe Library

- **Data Accuracy** Concerns It had been acknowledged that data capture for Worle Library was incorrect. Similarly, concerns were raised at the recent Parish Council public meeting regarding the reliability of usage data for Winscombe Library, particularly due to the ongoing malfunction of the access doors for the out-of-hours service. This technical failure likely underrepresents actual demand and usage.
- **Community Support for Option C** There was clear support among members for *Option C* in the consultation process — the option that ensures Winscombe Library continues to receive funding and support from North Somerset Council (NSC). This reflects the community's recognition of the library's value.
- **Social Impact and Wellbeing** Winscombe Library serves as more than just a place to borrow books. It provides a vital *warm space* for residents every day of the week and acts as a welcoming hub that combats loneliness and social isolation, particularly among vulnerable groups in the parish.
- **Economic Impact on Local Businesses** The library's current location contributes to foot traffic and vibrancy on the high street. Its closure or relocation could have a negative ripple effect on nearby businesses and services, undermining the economic health of the village centre.
- **Equity and Accessibility for Rural and Elderly Residents** Winscombe Library serves not only its immediate community but also several surrounding rural parishes. With limited public transport options and a high proportion of elderly residents, many would face significant barriers in accessing alternative libraries in larger towns. Removing this local resource risks deepening rural and age-related inequalities.
- **Shared Funding Opportunities** To ensure sustainability, contributions could be sought from neighbouring parishes where library usage can be demonstrated. This collaborative approach would reflect the shared benefit the library provides across parish boundaries.

Resolution: The Parish Council endorsed 'Option C' from the recent consultation, supporting continued funding of Winscombe Library by North Somerset Council (NSC). In light of strong public support for maintaining library services in the parish—demonstrated through both online and paper surveys—the Council resolved to continue to explore alternative arrangements with NSC should a decision be taken to close Winscombe Library. If necessary, the parish precept should be adjusted accordingly. The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

98.Parish Council loan to the Winscombe Community Association – to confirm final approval of loan and charge documents from parish council solicitors in advance of funds being drawn and passed across to the WCA. (Agenda item 7)

Resolved: That the loan and charge documents, as presented were approved by the council

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

Steps would now be taken to draw down the approved £250k loan from the PWLB for onward transfer to the WCA.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION (Agenda item 8)

- **Bus User Forum** – members were reminded of the on-line, and 'in-person' events taking place next week.

With no further business, the meeting concluded at 8.05 pm.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....



Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) – North Somerset Library Service

Directorate Corporate Services
Service area: Libraries
Lead Officer: Emma Wellard
Review Date: November 2025
Updated Post Consultation: December 2025
Updated Post Recommendation Report: January 2026

Budget Ref.	Budget Proposal	Budget Reduction £		
		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
CSD02	Libraries - Explore a new delivery model including reducing the number of library sites and exploring outreach and mobile delivery	£217,000	£217,000	

Equality Impacts

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget. Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Pill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided; and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual budget for new books and digital resources.

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

1. The Project

Background to project

The North Somerset Libraries Strategy (2021) outlines the requirement for libraries to adapt in response to evolving demand and financial pressures while continuing to meet statutory obligations. The Council's approved Medium Term Financial Plan, effective from April 2026, includes a 19% reduction in the Library Service budget (approximately £433,000), necessitating changes to service delivery.

To inform these changes, a public consultation was conducted between 31 July and 24 October 2025 to gather feedback on three potential options for transforming the service in line with strategic objectives and achieving the required savings. Following consideration of a range of factors, Option B (see below) has been identified as the recommended approach. This option prioritises areas of greatest need, safeguards equitable access in communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation and delivers the necessary savings through a combination of site adjustments, reductions in staffed hours, and central budget efficiencies. It also ensures continued compliance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

The consultation engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community organisations, and residents. Feedback was collected through multiple channels, including 4,403 responses via eConsult, community engagement events, and additional input received by email. These findings have informed the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups, and detailed assessments have been prepared for each affected site.

Recommended Proposal – Option B

- Reduce staffed opening hours across all Council-run libraries, extending self-service opening hours in mitigation where appropriate.
- Seek a community-managed model for Winscombe Library (retaining LibrariesWest access); close if a viable model cannot be agreed.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

- Close Worle Library because of building condition issues; provide alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away).
- Deliver c. £30,000 savings annually from the new books and digital resources budget.
- Reduce opening hours at the Healthy Living Centre Library one day a week to align with the lowest usage.
- Where libraries close, provide alternative access via outreach, developed according to community needs identified through the consultation.

Consultation feedback highlighted potential negative impacts on children and young people, older adults, disabled and neurodivergent residents, low-income households, and rural communities. Mitigations under Option B include targeted staffed hours, extended self-service with safety and accessibility controls, enhanced outreach and mobile provision, retention of Pill Library, support for a community-managed model at Winscombe, and clear pathways to volunteer supported community activities, such as the Home Library Service and digital inclusion support. Stock reductions will be managed through focused collection development, regional resource sharing (LibrariesWest), and increased promotion of eResources.

Post consultation update

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

1. Access to Library Services

- Families with young children: Libraries play a vital role in nurturing early literacy and fostering a love of reading. Families rely on libraries for borrowing books, attending activities such as Rhyme Time and Lego Club, and engaging in initiatives like the Summer Reading Challenge. Reduced opening hours, particularly on Saturdays, conflict with work and weekend commitments, limiting access and potentially hindering children's literacy growth and exposure to diverse literature.
- Working adults: Full-time workers depend on evening and weekend hours to access library services. A reduction in hours could significantly restrict this group's ability to use services, resulting in diminished opportunities for personal development and recreation.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

- Rural communities: Residents in rural areas, particularly in locations like Winscombe and Pill, expressed concern over potential library closures, which could disproportionately affect those without reliable public transport. Reduced access to books, digital resources, public computers, and community activities would exacerbate existing inequalities in rural areas.
- Disabled residents and older adults: Libraries often serve as accessible hubs for individuals with mobility challenges or disabilities, offering resources like audiobooks, large-print books, and computer access. Concerns were raised regarding unstaffed hours or closures, which would limit staff assistance, creating additional barriers for these groups.

2. Impact on Daily Routines

- Families: For many families, library visits form an integral part of their weekly schedule, particularly on weekends. Reductions in Saturday hours would disrupt family routines and limit access to educational and recreational activities.
- Older adults: Libraries are a critical part of retired individuals' daily or weekly routines, providing opportunities for social interaction, access to resources, and mental stimulation. Changes to opening hours or closures could heighten risks of social isolation and reduce quality of life.

3. Learning Opportunities

- Children and young people: Libraries are vital in supporting literacy and education, particularly for families who cannot afford to purchase books. Reduced access could negatively affect children's reading habits, school readiness, and academic performance, impacting long-term educational outcomes.
- Students and jobseekers: Libraries serve as essential spaces for studying, completing assignments, and accessing resources for job applications. Reduction in evening and weekend hours would restrict opportunities for these groups to fully utilise library services.

4. Social Connection and Wellbeing

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

- Community hub: Libraries are acknowledged as inclusive and welcoming environments for social engagement, learning, and leisure. Activities such as book clubs, craft groups, and conversation cafés were highlighted as crucial to fostering community cohesion, particularly for older adults, new parents, and other vulnerable groups.
- Mental health and wellbeing: Respondents frequently cited libraries as spaces that promote mental health and wellbeing, offering quiet areas to read, study, or simply spend time away from home. Reduced access could exacerbate feelings of loneliness and isolation for those living alone or experiencing mental health challenges.
- Neurodivergent individuals: Libraries are highly valued by neurodivergent individuals for providing quiet, calm, and structured environments that help them focus, build routines, and feel safe. These spaces offer a rare balance of tranquillity and inclusivity, creating a welcoming atmosphere where neurodivergent individuals can participate in community activities without fear of judgment. Respondents also highlighted the importance of being able to bring children with conditions such as ADHD to library activities and feeling supported rather than judged if the children are noisy. However, concerns were raised about how closures or changes to familiar libraries could disrupt routines and exacerbate feelings of overwhelm, creating barriers to accessing these vital benefits to wellbeing and inclusion.

5. Financial Strain

- Low-income households: Libraries provide an essential source of free access to books, digital resources, and the internet, particularly for individuals who cannot afford such services at home. Reduced hours or closures could place additional financial burdens on low-income households, limiting access to educational and developmental resources.

6. Impact on Specific User Groups

- Families with young children: Reduced library access would disproportionately impact families reliant on libraries for children's recreational and development activities, potentially affecting children's literacy and social development.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

- Older adults: Libraries are a lifeline for older adults, providing opportunities for social connection, intellectual engagement, and access to resources. Reduced access could lead to increased isolation and diminished quality of life for this group.
- Disabled residents: Individuals with disabilities highlighted the critical importance of library staff in providing assistance with technology, finding accessible reading materials, and navigating services. Unstaffed hours or closures could create significant barriers, reducing the inclusivity of library services.
- Rural communities: Library closures in rural areas like Winscombe and Pill would exacerbate challenges posed by limited public transport and the lack of alternative resources. Without access to nearby libraries, residents in these areas may face disproportionate impacts.
- Working adults: Reduced evening and weekend hours would hinder opportunities for working adults to utilise library services, creating disparities in access that particularly affect this group.

Page 28 8. Impact on Library Staff

Library staff are highly valued for their knowledge, approachability, and contribution to creating a welcoming environment. Respondents expressed concerns that staff reductions or reassignments could diminish the quality and personal nature of the services provided, compromising the library experience for many users.

8. Relation to Proposed Changes

- Reduced opening hours: The proposed reduction of opening hours, especially on Saturdays, was identified as a barrier for families and working adults who primarily rely on library access during weekends.
- Unstaffed hours: While some respondents supported the idea of extended unstaffed hours, others raised concerns about safety, accessibility, and the availability of assistance. Vulnerable individuals, including disabled residents and older adults, are likely to be disproportionately affected.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

- Library closures: The potential closure of libraries in Pill, Winscombe, and Worle is viewed as a major setback for local communities, with significant negative implications for community cohesion, learning opportunities, and social inclusion.
- Reduction in book budgets: Reducing the budget for new books and digital resources could discourage library use and limit access to diverse, up-to-date materials, particularly for those who rely on libraries as their primary source of educational and recreational media.

The proposed changes to library services have far-reaching implications, particularly for disadvantaged groups, including families, older adults, disabled residents, rural communities, and low-income households. Libraries serve as essential spaces for education, social interaction, and well-being, and reductions in access or resources could undermine these benefits. Mitigation measures should therefore prioritise maintaining equitable access to library services, with particular attention to the needs of vulnerable populations.

Page 210 9. Use of Libraries as Warm Spaces

Anecdotally, staff are aware that libraries are often used as warm, safe spaces by members of the community, particularly during colder months. However, this was not explicitly captured in the consultation question 'How do you usually use our library services?' and therefore does not appear as a theme in the feedback. This represents a missed opportunity to gather data on an important aspect of library use, as we currently do not hold formal information on this and acknowledge that it is difficult to capture systematically.

While the consultation did not highlight warm spaces as a dominant theme, it is reasonable to assume that closing libraries or reducing opening hours would have a negative impact on individuals who rely on them for warmth and comfort, especially those experiencing fuel poverty or social isolation. This underscores the broader role libraries play in supporting community wellbeing beyond their core educational and cultural functions.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers.

- **Children's Services & Family Support:** the library provides information and signposting to support for children's and family services. Changes at the library may affect referrals into local support networks.
- **Education Providers:** Local schools often rely on libraries for curriculum support, extracurricular activities, and student study spaces. Should libraries close, this could limit students' access to books, research materials, and technology.
- **Social & Health Services:** Libraries often serve as informal access points for health information, social service referrals, and mental health support programs. They provide access to information and support, promote health and wellbeing, signpost to professional support and enable residents to maintain independence for longer. Losing spaces or reducing opening hours could hinder outreach efforts.
- **Employment & Skills Training:** Access to free public wi-fi, printing and online resources will impact on delivery of council employment services. The closure will make it harder for unemployed or under-skilled individuals to access job support and community groups delivering outreach in this area will have to find alternative locations to operate. There also will be a reduction in local volunteering opportunities.
- **Local Arts & Cultural Organisations:** Libraries play a vital role in supporting arts-related events, writing groups, and cultural activities that enrich community life. Reduced opening hours may limit opportunities for cultural engagement and collaboration. Local organisations often rely on access to library archives and local history resources for research to inform projects and exhibitions; this access will be restricted, potentially causing delays. In addition, organisations use library spaces to promote their work and engage with residents, contributing to both corporate and library strategic objectives. Reduced availability of these spaces will diminish the time for such activities, potentially reducing their reach and overall impact.
- **Public Access to Technology:** Many individuals rely on libraries for free internet access, public computers, printing, online learning, and communication and the library also delivers face to face council services for those who are digitally excluded. If libraries close, this will make accessing essential online services and Council services more difficult for those lacking their own internet access or the skills to engage online. The proposed reduction in opening hours will marginally limit digital inclusion and make accessing essential online services and Council services more difficult for the most disadvantaged.

Section 2 – What do we know?

Who is likely to be affected by this project?

Community across North Somerset

Libraries are central to community cohesion, providing access to resources for education, employment, and social interaction. Their closure could disproportionately affect individuals who rely on free internet access, books, and quiet study spaces. Those who experience financial hardship may struggle to access information and recreational reading elsewhere, widening inequalities. Libraries in North Somerset operate on a district wide basis and are part of the wider LibrariesWest partnership which operates across 7 authorities in South West England (145 libraries, lending 2.5 million items). Libraries therefore offer residents free access to resources across a wider community than in their local area.

Council Partners

Libraries collaborate with other council services, acting as information hubs and assisting in delivering community outreach programs, for example, offering access to equipment lending and sales. Libraries provide support and signposting to North Somerset residents who are unable to access council services online. For complex enquiries, staff direct residents to a dedicated council services phone located within the library, ensuring access to the appropriate specialist support. Losing a library could mean added strain on other public services, such as job centres and community advice groups, which may need to accommodate displaced library users seeking assistance. A community managed library may not provide support for access to NS Council services.

North Somerset Council Employees

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. North Somerset Council are not seeking to make the required savings through redundancies, although it is likely that there will be an impact on staffing. The likely impact on staffing will

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is known. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow at that point which will affect the whole service. This period of uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

Service Users

Service users across the library network—including students, job seekers, families, and older residents—may experience reduced access to essential resources for education, employment, and personal development. Potential closures, shorter opening hours, and a reduced stock budget could limit opportunities for learning, digital inclusion, and cultural engagement. Children and young people may be disproportionately affected, as libraries provide vital support for early literacy, homework help, and educational programming.

Commissioned Services

Services that rely on libraries as venues for delivery—such as adult learning programs, digital inclusion initiatives, and literacy workshops—may struggle to find suitable alternatives. This disruption could impact service effectiveness and accessibility.

Voluntary/Community Groups

Local voluntary groups often use library spaces for meetings, training, and outreach. It also offers a venue to help publicise local events and activity to the community. Should the library close, the loss of this venue could limit their ability to function and promote services and activities effectively, reducing opportunities for community engagement and collaboration.

Post consultation update

Many respondents—over 1,100—selected “no impact” as their response. However, this requires careful interpretation. Many individuals who did not expect a direct personal impact still expressed concern for others, particularly children, older adults, disabled residents, and those experiencing financial hardship or digital exclusion. This indicates that “no impact” often reflected an

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

absence of immediate disruption rather than indifference, highlighting a shared understanding of libraries as vital community assets.

Among respondents who anticipated an impact, several consistent themes emerged. A key concern was reduced access due to limited staffed hours, especially for people managing work, education, or caring responsibilities. Travel and distance barriers were also frequently mentioned, with rural residents and those without private transport noting increased difficulty in reaching alternative services. Many respondents reported relying on library staff for help with digital services, information access, and general support—emphasizing the importance of face-to-face assistance in ensuring inclusive provision.

Other issues raised included discomfort with self-service technology, fewer opportunities for community activities, and low confidence in digital platforms. Respondents with disabilities highlighted potential barriers to access, particularly during unstaffed hours or following changes to physical infrastructure. Additional comments reflected concerns about book budgets, safety, and the erosion of local identity.

Summary of the impact for individual libraries

The Campus

The Campus Library is valued as safe, inclusive community spaces that provides free access to learning, social interaction, and essential resources. Feedback highlights their role in supporting vulnerable groups, including older adults, children, people with disabilities, neurodiverse individuals, and those experiencing social isolation or economic disadvantage. Staff interactions are seen as central to the library experience, offering both practical assistance and emotional support.

Concerns were raised about proposals to reduce opening hours as these changes disproportionately impact those with limited mobility, low incomes, or caring responsibilities. Weekend and evening access is particularly important for working families, students, and commuters. While digital services like BorrowBox are appreciated, respondents stressed they should complement physical libraries, not replace them, due to barriers for those without internet access or digital confidence.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Respondents strongly value core services such as access to physical books and activities for children, emphasizing libraries' role in promoting literacy, well-being, and community cohesion. Reductions in hours, closures, or reliance on digital-only solutions risk exacerbating inequalities and limiting access for marginalized groups. Overall, the Campus is seen as a vital hub for education, inclusion, and human connection, and any cost-saving measures should prioritize maintaining accessibility and safeguarding these essential functions.

Clevedon Library

Clevedon Library is regarded as an important community hub, providing education, social contact, and a safe, inclusive space for all ages. Respondents highlighted its role in reducing social isolation, particularly as other local services decline. While proposed changes to opening hours may have limited immediate impact, concerns focus on broader service reductions—especially cuts to book stock funding and staffed hours. Maintaining funding for new books is seen as essential to preserve the quality and relevance of collections. Reduced staffed hours risk excluding vulnerable users who rely on in-person support and cannot easily adapt to self-service or digital systems. There is strong opposition to any closures or significant cuts, with respondents emphasizing libraries' importance for lifelong learning, wellbeing, and community cohesion. Any future reductions could disproportionately affect those with limited mobility, digital confidence, or financial resources.

Healthy Living Centre Library

The Healthy Living Centre Library is a vital resource for vulnerable groups, including individuals with physical or learning disabilities, mobility challenges, and health conditions. It provides essential access for those facing digital exclusion, offering computers, printers, and staff support for online tasks. Older adults value the library for social interaction and mental stimulation, while parents, caregivers, and home-educated children rely on it for literacy development, educational activities, and quiet study spaces. Services such as Rhymetime and adult literacy programs further emphasize its educational role.

The library fosters social inclusion and community cohesion, serving as one of the few remaining public spaces for interaction, particularly for those isolated by age, disability, or financial hardship. Staff support is critical for IT assistance and personalized guidance, and reductions in staffed hours would disproportionately affect users with additional needs. Financial and geographical

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

barriers amplify reliance on the library, especially in areas with high deprivation and limited transport options. Respondents stressed its importance for mental health and well-being, citing its role as a safe, welcoming environment that combats loneliness. Overall, the Healthy Living Centre Library is recognized as a cornerstone of community infrastructure, and service reductions risk deepening inequalities and eroding social support networks.

Nailsea Library

Nailsea Library is regarded as an essential community hub, offering educational opportunities, social interaction, and mental health support beyond its core role of providing books. Respondents emphasized the importance of keeping libraries under council control to ensure long-term sustainability, expressing concerns about community-run models. While minimal changes to opening hours may have limited impact, reductions in stock funding and staffed hours pose significant risks, particularly for vulnerable groups such as low-income families, disabled individuals, and those without private transport. Staff presence is seen as essential for safety, accessibility, and support, though some users welcome extended self-service options. Cuts to book budgets and staffing could undermine the library's ability to meet diverse needs, exacerbating inequality. Overall, Nailsea Library is valued as an inclusive space that fosters education, social cohesion, and well-being, and respondents strongly oppose measures that diminish these functions.

Pill Library

Pill Library is a critical resource for an area with high levels of deprivation, providing free access to books, IT facilities, and a safe, inclusive space for learning and social connection. It plays a vital role in supporting disabled individuals, neurodiverse users, and those with mobility challenges, offering a quiet and familiar environment that meets their needs. The library helps address socio-economic barriers by serving families who cannot afford internet access or transport to alternative libraries, with travel costs and time cited as significant obstacles. Activities such as Lego Club, Code Club, and Rhyme Time are essential for children's development, particularly for low-income households.

Respondents emphasized the importance of staffed hours for personalized support and expressed concerns that service reductions or closure would exacerbate digital exclusion, social isolation, and mental health challenges. Pill Library fosters community

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

cohesion and inclusion across cultural and faith groups, acting as one of the few remaining public spaces for interaction. Feedback also raised fairness issues around consultation accessibility, representation of usage data, and resource allocation. Overall, Pill Library is seen as a vital hub for education, wellbeing, and equality, and its closure or significant reduction would disproportionately impact vulnerable groups.

Portishead Library

Portishead Library is regarded as an essential community service, providing safe, inclusive spaces for education, literacy development, and social interaction. It supports all age groups, including children, older adults, and vulnerable individuals. While minor reductions in opening hours may have limited impact for most users, concerns were raised about families with young children and those unable to use unstaffed libraries. Respondents strongly opposed any closures, emphasizing the library's role in reducing isolation and providing access to books, digital resources, and council services. Staffed hours are considered critical for IT support and assistance for users with additional needs, and cuts to book budgets or increased reliance on self-service were seen as detrimental. The library plays a key role in fostering early literacy and educational attainment, and respondents stressed that protecting core services and staffed access is vital to maintaining equality and community cohesion.

Weston Library

Weston Library is highly valued as a social, educational, and cultural hub, offering safe, inclusive spaces for learning, digital access, and community engagement. Respondents emphasized its role in supporting early literacy, lifelong learning, and mental well-being. Reduced opening hours—particularly on Saturdays and evenings—were identified as a significant barrier for working individuals, families, and students, limiting access for those with weekday commitments. Concerns were raised about digital exclusion, as the library provides essential IT resources and support for older residents and low-income users.

The library's cultural and historical function, including the Frederick Wood Local Studies Room, was highlighted as critical for research, education, and heritage preservation. Proposed reductions in staffed hours for this resource risk limiting access to archives and creating overcrowding during limited opening times. Respondents praised library staff for their expertise and support, stressing that reduced staffing would diminish service quality and accessibility. Overall, Weston Library is seen as a cornerstone of

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

education, cultural heritage, and community cohesion, and service reductions could disproportionately impact vulnerable groups and undermine its role as a vital public resource.

Winscombe Library

Winscombe Library is a vital resource for a wide rural catchment area, including villages such as Banwell and Sandford. Limited public transport to alternative libraries creates significant access barriers, particularly for older adults, disabled residents, and single parents without private transport. The library provides essential educational, cultural, and social benefits, supporting children's literacy through programs like Rhymetime and the Summer Reading Challenge, while offering a safe, welcoming space for families and older residents at risk of isolation.

For low-income households and those without internet access, Winscombe Library is critical for IT facilities and free resources. While extended self-service hours are supported in principle, there is strong preference for staffed hours, as staff are seen as essential for inclusivity and assistance with IT, book selection, and other services. Concerns were raised about the sustainability of community-managed models due to volunteer capacity and governance challenges. Retaining Winscombe within the North Somerset Library network is considered essential to ensure equitable access to high-quality resources and the wider LibrariesWest services.

Worle Library

Worle Library is regarded as a necessary community hub, offering inclusive access to books, IT facilities, and face-to-face support for vulnerable groups. Respondents emphasized its role in supporting older residents, families with young children, neurodiverse individuals, and those with disabilities or low incomes. Closure would disproportionately impact these groups due to significant transport barriers—poor public transport, prohibitive travel costs, and physical limitations make alternative sites like The Campus or Weston Town Library inaccessible for many.

The library provides essential services beyond book lending, including Children's Centre activities, digital inclusion, and social contact for isolated residents. It is valued as a safe, neutral space fostering community cohesion and cultural exchange. Concerns were raised about fairness, as Worle Library is well-used yet proposed for closure. Respondents stressed that even small service

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

reductions compound other council cuts, increasing inequality. Overall, Worle Library is seen as a lifeline for education, wellbeing, and inclusion, and its closure would significantly disadvantage vulnerable groups.

Yatton Library

Yatton Library is valued as an essential community resource, providing safe, inclusive spaces for education, literacy development, and social interaction. It plays a key role in supporting children's learning and fostering a love of reading. While minor reductions in opening hours may have limited impact for most users, concerns were raised about reduced weekend staffed hours and the exclusion of young people who cannot use unstaffed libraries. Respondents emphasized the importance of staffed hours for IT support, safety, and assistance for those with additional needs. Protecting budgets for new books and digital services was seen as critical, with strong opposition to cuts that could undermine access for low-income families. Libraries are regarded as lifelines for vulnerable groups, including older adults and those without transport, and any significant service reductions risk widening social inequality and harming wellbeing. Overall, to preserve its role in education and community life, Yatton Library needs sustained access to staff and essential services, ensuring equality across user groups.

What data or evidence do you have to inform this Equality Impact Assessment?

To inform this Equality Impact Assessment, we gathered a range of data sources to ensure a thorough understanding of library usage and community needs. An initial survey was conducted across all branches between 24 March and 18 April 2025, collecting direct insights from library users.

We also analysed historical membership data from the library management system to identify usage trends across the district and incorporated information from council planning teams and wider demographic statistics to reflect the broader community context.

Since the survey, the evidence base has been strengthened with feedback from the recent Library Services Transformation Consultation. This combined data informed the development of final options and recommendations, which will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Who have you consulted with as a part of this project OR who do you plan to consult with?

As part of this project, a twelve-week public consultation was undertaken from 31 July 2025 to 24 October 2025 to explore user needs and assess potential impacts of the proposed options on protected groups. The consultation provided an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community partners, volunteers, and local communities. This process enabled the collection of valuable feedback and ensured that diverse perspectives were considered in decision-making.

Prior to the consultation, a range of data sources was gathered to develop a comprehensive understanding of library usage and community needs. This included a district-wide library survey conducted between 24 March and 18 April 2025 across all branches, including Winscombe, to capture insights directly from service users.

Page 28
To ensure fairness and transparency, the consultation was widely publicised and made accessible to both library users and non-users. Information about the proposals and opportunities to provide feedback was shared through multiple channels. Respondents were invited to comment on the importance of libraries, the potential impact of proposed changes, and suggestions for improvement. This inclusive approach enabled non-users to contribute views on barriers to access, alternative service models, and the wider role of libraries. Of the total responses received, 117 individuals indicated that they do not currently use the library service, demonstrating that the consultation captured perspectives beyond regular users.

Consultation documents and response forms were available in paper format in all libraries and online via the Council's website at <https://n-somerset.inconsult.uk/Libraries/consultationHome>. A total of 4,403 responses were submitted through paper and online questionnaires, supplemented by additional feedback received via email, children's surveys, and informal conversations at drop-in events, bringing overall participation to over 5,000 individuals. Fourteen engagement events were held in libraries and community locations, attended by approximately 186 participants.

Briefings were delivered to all ward members, town and parish councillors, followed by email summaries encouraging wider community engagement. Articles promoting the consultation appeared in the *Town and Parish Digest* throughout the consultation period. Over 200 stakeholders were contacted directly by email and invited to participate as individuals or organisations.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Additional coverage included features in *eLife*, distributed to over 100,000 email addresses in August and October. Notifications were sent via the NSC app to 21,000 registered users, and 42,000 North Somerset Library members received email invitations in August and October. Regular updates were posted on social media, and Cllr Solomon participated in an interview on BBC Radio Bristol to raise awareness.

All North Somerset schools were contacted and encouraged to share the consultation with pupils, parents, and carers. The Schools Engagement and Participation Officer also visited schools to speak directly with young people and invite contributions.

This approach reflects the Council's commitment to broad and inclusive engagement and demonstrates the extensive efforts made to raise awareness of the consultation among diverse groups across North Somerset. While it is acknowledged that no engagement process can capture every individual view, significant steps were taken to maximise participation through widespread publicity, social media activity, and prominent signage. Initial evaluation of responses supports the conclusion that awareness of the consultation was widespread.

Of the respondents, 1,539 (34.95%) indicated equality-related concerns. This figure may include individuals selecting multiple protected characteristics or fairness issues (e.g., disability, age, sexual orientation, low income) and therefore does not represent 1,539 unique individuals but rather the total number of selections. The high number of equality concerns suggests that proposed changes to opening hours and reductions in the stock budget have broad potential impacts across multiple protected groups and fairness categories. These issues are not confined to a single group but span disability, age, income, sexual orientation, and other vulnerabilities, highlighting the significant role libraries play in supporting inclusive access for diverse community members.

The draft EIAs were also reviewed by the Council's equality stakeholder group. The observations made are shown below, along with action taken and / or notes from officers:

Meeting of 12 December:

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Observation	Response
The EIA should acknowledge the importance of the warm space scheme and the potential to lose this within some localities.	The EIA has been updated to reflect this feedback
Important to note with the increase in the provision of digital services libraries are often cited as a mitigation for those who cannot access information online. The further impact on the potential for reducing the number of libraries for those should be emphasised within the EIA.	The impact that the proposals - if accepted - will have on access to digital services is flagged in various sections of the assessment.
Have we considered the impacts on those who do not currently use the service and the impact of opportunity beyond the immediate location.	The consultation on the options presented was promoted widely to members and non-members of libraries. The impacts identified by non-users who responded to the consultation have been considered in the analysis and this assessment.
The results of the consultation should also reflect non users of the service.	The consultation on the options presented was promoted widely to members and non-members of libraries. The impacts identified by non-users who responded to the consultation have been considered in the analysis and this assessment.

Meeting of 12 January:

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

It was acknowledged that the EIA was a comprehensive assessment	Noted
How will we follow up and evaluate if the decisions that we are making are the right ones with no unintended consequences?	Mitigations will be subject to ongoing review and improvement, where possible.
Review the language used. For example, 'valued' Vs 'highly valued'. Can we explain the use of this terminology.	The terminology used is taken from the analysis of the consultation responses. A definition of terms is included in this analysis and is available at Future of Library Services in North Somerset – Consultation Summary Report
Some libraries are key for digital access - has this been explored from a data set perspective. For example, are the reductions of the library service in areas where there is a reduced digital access?	This finding is reflected in the analysis of the consultation responses. We will be looking at outreach with these needs in mind, for example, looking at targeted outreach work where the needs have been identified, for example digital outreach work in village halls etc. Where communities are impacted, we will continue to monitor and talk to those communities to ensure effective use of ongoing resources.
EIA is currently not conclusive re the options that are proposed so it is difficult to really comment on the likely impact.	Noted
Where there are existing communities that don't have a library service, how do they access information/services - what is working well for them.	We have analysed where people have responded from. We have a good amount of data about what

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Could the insights from these areas help us to plan solutions to the current model that is currently proposed.	people want from libraries so we will use this to inform responses.
The council's physical presence in local areas is important. There is a cumulative impact where changes in services such as transport etc. This will contribute to worsening outcomes. Additionally, in some communities libraries are our only insight into that community.	Noted
Representation of non-users and hard to reach groups is important. What are we doing to ensure those who don't have connections are engaged and able to take part, e.g. those people on the 'edge' of participation - those who are homeless etc.	We have used the North Somerset Together network to help promote the consultation to the widespread groups that they represent. We have some confidence that hard to reach groups have been represented. The libraries would welcome ongoing dialogue with people working with under-represented groups.
How proactive were we in ensuring current users participated?	Engagement was promoted as widely as possible. We used volunteers in libraries, posters/banners etc, active promotion by staff, engagement events, partner promotions. Lots of feedback from groups such as those who are visually impaired could participate.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Are there any gaps in our evidence to support this Equality Impact Assessment? If so, what are the plans to gather this information?

An earlier iteration of this assessment acknowledged that the original small-scale survey, which was not designed to capture the views of children, resulted in gaps in understanding how young people engage with library services and how potential changes might affect them. To address this, the Council implemented a comprehensive approach during the public consultation to engage children, young people, and those working with them. Senior leaders and governors from local schools were contacted directly via email at the outset, and additional outreach included informal discussions with parents and school staff during library visits and engagement events.

The Children's Services Engagement and Participation Team promoted the consultation through social media, with posts widely reshared by community groups, and conducted in-person school visits to support young people in completing questionnaires during VOICE sessions. Some schools also distributed consultation details through their own communication channels. At Pill Library and Children's Centre, engagement extended to childminders, supported by proactive communication and reinforced through library-based activities such as Rhymetime sessions. Further promotion occurred via social media platforms and through the Friends of Pill Library group, which undertook local outreach, including market stalls, social media posts, press coverage, and poster displays. The consultation was additionally publicised through the North Somerset 'Together' network, involving a broad range of Community partners. These combined efforts demonstrate the Council's commitment to inclusive engagement and widespread awareness of the consultation opportunity.

In addition, the original survey did not include feedback from non-users of libraries. To address this, the consultation was promoted widely to maximise awareness and provide as many people as possible—including those who do not currently use libraries—with the opportunity to respond.

Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

Will the project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) on any of these groups?

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.
H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None | + = Positive, - = Negative

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)			x			x	In the 2021 Census, In the North Somerset 17.7% of residents identified themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act, having day to day activities limited a little or a lot. Across North Somerset libraries 16% (350 out of 2410) of library survey respondents identified as having a physical or mental health condition which impacts their day-to-day life. <u>Post consultation update</u> 400 (9.08%) respondents expressed concerns about proposed changes to library services. Disabled individuals, including those who are neurodiverse or

have mobility or sensory impairments, highlighted libraries as essential inclusive spaces. They provide quiet environments, routine, and tailored staff support that many rely on.

Respondents stressed the importance of libraries near accessible parking. Limited transport options make alternative locations difficult to reach.

Quiet, calm spaces help neurodiverse individuals feel comfortable and focused. Crowded environments and reliance on digital services were cited as barriers. Activities like Lego mornings and familiar layouts were praised for supporting people with ADHD and autism.

Bright lights and overstimulation can make self-service systems inaccessible. Staff assistance was described as critical.

Structured, safe environments help manage mental health conditions.

Respondents stressed that staff support is essential for independence and accessibility, and reducing hours would

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

				increase isolation creating a significant negative impact. <u>Option B</u> Disabled individuals, including those with mobility, sensory, or neurodiverse conditions, rely heavily on libraries as safe, structured, and inclusive spaces. They value quiet environments, routine, and staff assistance for accessibility and technology support. Reductions in staffed hours at various libraries and the potential closure of Winscombe Library and closure of Worle Library would significantly impact independence and increase isolation. Concerns include difficulty accessing alternative sites due to limited transport, overstimulation from self-service systems, and barriers to digital-only solutions. Libraries also play a vital role in supporting mental health and providing calm spaces for neurodivergent users.
People from different ethnic groups	x			94% of library survey respondents identified as White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. According to the North

Somerset JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) 95.7% of the overall population is White.

Post consultation update

81 (1.84%) people asked for race to be considered as an equality issue. While direct feedback from ethnic minority communities was limited, respondents emphasized the role libraries play in supporting people who do not speak English as a first language.

Staffed hours were highlighted as vital for tutoring and English language learning.

Some respondents expressed concern that minority communities were not explicitly consulted. This assessment remains as low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.

Option B

Direct feedback from ethnic minority communities was limited, but libraries were identified as important for English language learning and tutoring. Staffed

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

					hours are crucial for supporting individuals who do not speak English as a first language.
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	x		x		68% of library survey respondents were female and 4% of survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act due to pregnancy or maternity. In North Somerset, Census data indicates that 51.4% of the population is women, therefore women will be disproportionately affected by proposals to make amendments to the library service. Should any library close, this would result in the discontinuation of services such as Rhyme Time for pre-school children and their parents / carers. Evidence suggests that participation in such sessions can have a positive impact on maternal mental health, offering opportunities for social connection, routine, and support during the early stages of parenthood. The removal of this provision may therefore

disproportionately affect new mothers and primary carers, particularly those experiencing isolation or mental health challenges.

Post consultation update

174 (3.95%) people asked for sex, and / or pregnancy / maternity to be considered as an equalities issue. The library provides a safe, accessible environment for parents and carers, offering early literacy programs such as Rhymetime and fostering social connections among families. Women, particularly mothers, would be disproportionately affected by changes to library services.

Free activities like rhyme time support babies' development and maternal mental health.

Libraries provide accessible venues for families who cannot afford alternatives.

Limited transport options particularly affect mothers with young children.

Activities were described as lifelines, in rural communities such as Pill and

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

				Winscombe, potential closure of the library would have a significant negative impact. <u>Option B</u> Women, particularly mothers and carers, are disproportionately affected by changes to library services. Libraries provide safe, accessible spaces for early years activities such as Rhymetime, which support child development and maternal mental health. The closure of Worle Library will limit these opportunities, especially for families who cannot afford alternatives or don't have transport to get to the Campus. Transport barriers in rural areas like Winscombe amplify the impact, making local provision essential for social connection and wellbeing.
People who are LGBTQ+	x		x	4% of library survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act, due to sexual orientation. The North Somerset Census average was 2.64%, which would indicate a higher impact on LGBTQ+ communities. This higher usage rate is likely the result of community

partner use of library space, rather than a reflection of the average library user.

Post consultation update

58 (1.32%) people asked for sexual orientation to be considered. Libraries were described as safe, inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals. Respondents noted that staffed hours are key to maintaining a welcoming and inclusive environment.

There would be a medium impact on inclusivity if staffed hours are reduced and libraries are closed.

Option B

Libraries are widely regarded as safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals. Staffed hours are key to maintaining this welcoming environment. Reductions in staffed access or closures could undermine inclusivity and create perceived safety concerns. While the overall impact is assessed as low, the risk to community cohesion and representation is notable.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

People on a low income	x	x	While we don't hold data on the deprivation level of library service users, we know that 17% of library survey respondents come to the library because they cannot afford internet access at home, and 36% don't have access to the internet at home. This figure varies significantly across library locations, which suggests that affordability barriers are not uniform and may require targeted interventions in areas with higher reported levels of digital exclusion. Others may not be able to buy books or heat their homes and therefore the closure is assessed to have a negative impact on more deprived groups. In the 2021 Census 33.5% of households in North Somerset had one or more dimension of deprivation. <u>Post consultation update</u> Library closures or reduced hours were seen as disproportionately affecting low-income families who rely on libraries for

free internet, educational resources, and social connection.

Digital exclusion: respondents told us they rely on libraries for internet and printing.

Education access: Libraries provide free learning opportunities for families who cannot afford alternatives.

Warm spaces: Libraries act as safe refuges during cold months for those unable to heat their homes.

Option B

Low-income households depend on libraries for free access to books, IT facilities, printing, and internet services. The closure of Worle Library and reduced hours at the Healthy Living Centre Library will exacerbate digital exclusion and limit educational opportunities. Libraries also act as warm spaces during colder months, providing refuge for those experiencing fuel poverty. These changes could deepen financial hardship and social isolation for disadvantaged groups.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

People in particular age groups	x		x	Children and older people are more likely to use library services and would therefore be disproportionately affected by proposals to make savings across the library network. Survey data shows that 492 respondents (20%) were aged over 75, compared to 11.7% of the North Somerset population in this age group (Census 2021). Similarly, 16.5% of the population are aged 14 or under, and 28% of library members are 15 and under highlighting that both younger and older age groups represent a significant proportion of library users. This indicates that any reduction in library services could have a greater impact on groups who rely on them most—particularly older residents and children. <u>Post consultation update</u> 544 (12.36%) people asked for age to be considered in relation to fairness. Children

and older adults were identified as groups most reliant on library services.

Libraries support literacy and provide free educational activities (e.g., Lego Club, Code Club), especially in low-income areas.

Libraries help combat isolation and provide lifelong learning opportunities. Transport barriers were highlighted as a major concern. Libraries help children develop skills and older adults combat isolation, a reduction in service could have a high impact on education and social wellbeing.

Option B

Children and older adults are among the most frequent library users and would experience the greatest impact from service reductions. Libraries support early literacy, homework help, and activities like Lego Club for children, while older adults rely on them for social contact and mental stimulation. Reduced hours and closure of Worle Library risks increasing isolation

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

				among older people and limiting educational opportunities for young people, particularly in low-income areas.
People in particular faith groups	x			Census data indicates that 45.3% of people in North Somerset have no religion. In our recent survey, 125 respondents indicated that their religion, belief (or none) needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. 2021 This represents 6% of respondents and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 80 (1.82%) respondents asked for religion to be considered in relation to equalities. Minimal feedback was received on religious or belief-based needs. This assessment remains as none in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly. <u>Option B</u>

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

				Minimal feedback was received regarding faith-related needs. Libraries are generally inclusive spaces, and no significant impacts were identified for faith groups.
People who are married or in a civil partnership	x			49.4% of people over the age of 16 in North Somerset are married or in a registered civil partnership according to the 2021 Census. 73 (3%) respondents indicated that being married or in a civil partnership needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 59 (1.34%) people asked for marital status to be considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as none in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly. <u>Option B</u> No distinct impacts were identified for this group. Libraries remain neutral spaces,

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

					and changes are unlikely to disproportionately affect individuals based on marital status.
People who are undergoing gender reassignment		x			Library survey responses indicate that only 2% of library users identified as being a different gender to the one assigned at birth, and therefore any impacts are deemed negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 33 (0.75%) people asked for gender reassignment to be considered. Trans and non-binary individuals emphasized the importance of libraries as safe, neutral spaces. Concerns were raised about reduced safety and accessibility during unstaffed hours. This assessment remains as none in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly. <u>Option B</u> Trans and non-binary individuals emphasized the importance of libraries as

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

					safe, neutral spaces. Concerns were raised about reduced safety and accessibility during unstaffed hours. While the overall impact is assessed as low, maintaining safeguarding and inclusive practices (including at Winscombe Library if this transfers to a community supported solution) is essential to mitigate risks.
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:			x		We do not hold data for these groups; however, knowledge of the local community would indicate that these groups are not highly represented in this area. As part of the consultation process, we intend to gather more detailed data and better understand the potential impact on these groups—particularly unpaid carers—to ensure their needs and perspectives are fully considered. <u>Post consultation update</u> In addition to impacts on groups with protected characteristics, the consultation highlighted several important themes

affecting other community groups who rely on library services for accessibility, wellbeing, and social inclusion

Working Individuals and Parents: Reduced evening and weekend hours disproportionately affect those with standard working patterns or caring responsibilities. Limited flexibility makes it difficult for these groups to access libraries, reducing opportunities for family engagement and literacy activities.

Care Experienced Individuals: Some respondents requested consideration for care-experienced people, though no detailed comments were provided. This suggests a need for proactive engagement with this group in future consultations.

Safe, Warm Spaces: Libraries provide secure, welcoming environments, particularly valued during colder months. Closure or reduced hours could remove a vital refuge for those without alternative safe spaces, increasing isolation.

		Transport and Rural Barriers: Poor public transport and long distances to alternative libraries create significant access challenges for rural communities. Residents without cars or on low incomes face compounded disadvantages, raising fairness concerns about resource allocation. Mental Health and Wellbeing: Libraries offer routine, structure, and social contact that support mental health recovery and reduce isolation. Closure or reduced access risks worsening mental health outcomes for those who rely on these spaces for stability. Carers and Time Constraints: Carers depend on local libraries for health information and respite opportunities. Travel difficulties and time pressures make local provision essential. Adults with Low Literacy: Libraries host programs like Read Easy, providing safe, non-judgmental spaces for adults improving literacy skills. Closure would

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

		remove critical support for these individuals. Environmental and Community Impact: Local libraries reduce unnecessary travel, supporting sustainability and lowering carbon emissions. Walkable access fosters community spirit and engagement. Perceived Inequity in Service Distribution: Concerns about fairness where closures affect some communities more than others, particularly rural areas versus urban investment. Feedback suggests feelings of exclusion and loss of local identity when services are concentrated elsewhere.

Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other budget savings? **Yes**

Changes made through implementing the recommendations of the outcome of the Library Service Transformation Consultation will enable operational changes to be made at the Campus, contributing to the MTFP savings requirement shown below:

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

		Budget reduction (£)		
Budget Reference	Budget Proposal	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
CHS09	Campus - reduce cost to become cost neutral over the next two years	130,000		

Section 4 – Options

What other options have been considered?

Do nothing. The Council has declared a financial emergency: this option is not feasible as transformation is required to achieve the £433k revenue savings target included in the Council's MTFP and helps ensure that we continue to deliver sustainable services with our communities.

Consideration of Alternative Service Delivery Models

The project team has reviewed proposals for the transformation of library services nationwide and continues to monitor emerging models that could be relevant to North Somerset Council's Library Service. While approaches vary between local authorities, many share common features, such as co-location or integration of services alongside other community or partner organisations where libraries remain operational.

Several authorities have transferred their library services to independent organisations for management and delivery. These organisations take various legal forms, including private limited companies with charitable status, independent mutual societies

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

owned by staff and community members, and charitable community benefit societies. Current examples include *Libraries Unlimited* (Devon & Torbay), *Explore York*, and *Inspire Culture* (Nottingham). Both *Explore York* and *Inspire Culture* deliver additional services—such as archives, schools library services, and adult education—under their contracts with local authorities. Guidance on alternative delivery models has been published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and the Local Government Association (LGA) has produced resources and case studies illustrating different approaches.

After careful consideration, the project team concluded that this option is not suitable for North Somerset Council's Library Service for the following reasons:

- The service is already part of a well-established consortium, LibrariesWest, comprising seven local authorities. This partnership delivers significant financial and operational benefits through shared procurement, economies of scale, technology, and standardised procedures.
- Several library services previously transferred out of local authority control have since returned in-house due to contractual and financial challenges. Examples include Suffolk, Peterborough, Northumberland, and Wigan.
- Outsourcing library services could reduce the ability to deliver against North Somerset Council's corporate objectives.
- Establishing a new organisation and supporting the transition process would incur substantial costs.
- The statutory responsibility for providing library services remains with the local authority.

Transfer to a Trust model. This option was rejected (see above).

Consider adopting either Option A or Option C, as presented in the consultation. These options were rejected in favour of option B for the reasons outlined in section 1 of the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Section 5 – Action Plan for potential implementation of recommendations (Option B)

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	For disabled people, including those who are neurodivergent, where needed, the library service will expand outreach services to ensure continued access to Library resources. We will develop and promote community-based activities to impacted users that, while outside statutory provision, support engagement and access to resources. These activities will be delivered in partnership with local organisations, charities, and community groups, and may be supported by volunteers to ensure sustainability and reach. Local community transport links will be explored to facilitate regular visits to alternative branches. Staffed assistance windows will be prioritised in retained libraries. Euans	Emma Wellard (or delegated colleague)	April 2027

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

	Guide will be updated to include times for neurodiverse individuals who prefer quiet times. Assistive technology will be promoted through digital support sessions. Access to extended access inductions will be improved.		
Women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	Expanding mobile and outreach services and partnering with colleagues in Family Hubs and potentially Public Health to deliver targeted maternity and pregnancy events and activities. Partnering with local community centres to provide information on topics such as women's health and pregnancy and maternity services. Deliver Rhymetime and early years activities via partner venues, or The Campus in areas affected by closures. Continue to provide safe, welcoming spaces in retained sites.	Emma Wellard (or delegated colleague)	From September 2026

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

People who are LGBTQ+	Work with existing partnerships and networks to deliver targeted support to these groups to maintain inclusivity. This will include ensuring representation and visibility in outreach activities. Continue to provide inclusive training for staff and volunteers and promote visible representation in collections and displays. Ensure safeguarding during extended access.	Emma Wellard (or delegated colleague)	From September 2026
People on a low income	Expanding mobile Library and / or other outreach services and partnering with groups and centres to provide information and access to Council and digital services. Mobile Library includes digital access. Promote signposting to digital skills drop-ins. Increase promotion of eResources to reduce need to travel.	Emma Wellard (or delegated colleague)	From September 2026

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

People in particular age groups – children and older people	Expanding mobile Library and outreach services and partnering with groups and centres to provide information and access to Council and digital services and delivery of activities for pre-school children in community locations. Digital Offer – providing online access to information, advice and support services in the Worle area.	Emma Wellard (or delegated colleague)	From September 2026
Stock / digital budget	To manage the additional savings required, the Library service will prioritise core collections, including children's books. LibrariesWest interlending will be optimised to maintain access to a wide range of resources. Promotion of eBooks and eAudio will be increased, and opportunities for financial donations and sponsorship will be explored to supplement the reduced budget.	Nicki Bobbette	From April 2027

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Healthy Living Centre Library	Programming at the Healthy Living Centre Library will be rebalanced across the remaining open days to minimise disruption. Changes will be communicated clearly to users, and the impact of these adjustments will be monitored closely. Hours will be reviewed and adjusted if necessary to meet community needs. The feasibility of introducing self-service hours will be explored.	Emma Wellard (or delegated colleague)	From September 2026
Pill Library	Working in conjunction with the Friends of Pill Library group and the local community, the library service will stabilise the offer at Pill Library by aligning services with local demand to ensure accessibility for the community. Targeted outreach will be expanded to reduce barriers for vulnerable groups, and council-run support for digital inclusion will be maintained to help residents access online services and resources.	Nicki Bobbette	From September 2026

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Winscombe Library	For Winscombe Library, the Council will provide governance and training support to develop a community supported solution. LibrariesWest access will be retained to ensure continuity of services and resource sharing. Clear service standards will be defined, and a contingency plan will be in place should closure become necessary, including outreach activities, and signposting to transport options.	Emma Wellard	From April 2026 onwards
Worle Library	In response to the closure of Worle Library, a comprehensive communication plan will be implemented to keep residents informed. The library service will signpost users to The Campus, located approximately 1.5 miles away, as an alternative service point. Outreach will be introduced to maintain local access. Specific support will be provided for	NSC Communications Team	From April 2026

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

	digitally excluded residents to ensure they can continue to access essential services.		

If after planned actions you anticipate negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

Impacts of the reduction and removal of access to Council services for digitally excluded customers cannot be entirely mitigated by community partners (who may or may not wish to support this). This is due to the required levels of data protection and knowledge of council services and teams required to offer this support.

Whilst the Council will continue to deliver Library services in alternative ways should the Library close, the wider benefits of accessing Library services through a physical building and the social connection this brings may be lost. This is likely to result in an increase in social isolation, loneliness, cohesion and deprivation in the local community.

Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with those effected?

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

Section 6 – Monitoring

What are the governance arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actions listed above and the actual impact on protected or significant groups?

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

A full plan will be put in place once the outcome of the consultation is known and a decision made on a way forward.

Section 7 – Publish the Assessment

How will you publish this Equality Impact Assessment?

A comprehensive version of the Equality Impact Assessment will be made available on a dedicated webpage. This will include downloadable documents and contact information for further inquiries or feedback.

Hard copies will be made available through local libraries so that individuals without internet access can review the materials.

These measures are intended to provide broad public access and encourage informed participation in the consultation process.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Campus Library

Directorate	Corporate Services
Service area:	Libraries
Lead Officer:	Emma Wellard
Review date:	November 2025
Updated Post consultation:	December 2025
Updated Post Recommendation Report:	January 2026

Equality Impacts

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget. Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Pill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided; and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual budget for new books and digital

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

resources.

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Director sign off:	<<Text here>>

1. The Project

Background to project

The North Somerset Libraries Strategy (2021) outlines the requirement for libraries to adapt in response to evolving demand and financial pressures while continuing to meet statutory obligations. The Council's approved Medium Term Financial Plan, effective from April 2026, includes a 19% reduction in the Library Service budget (approximately £433,000), necessitating changes to service delivery.

The Campus Community Services budget (which covers the cost of staffing and running the Campus Library) also has a savings target to meet.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

To meet these savings targets, the option agreed to go to public consultation in summer 2025 included a proposal to close The Campus at 18.00 instead of 20.00 on weekdays and to close at 13.00 instead of 17.00 on Saturdays and Sundays. The feasibility of introducing self-service facilities will be explored. This document is designed to assess the equalities impacts this will have on the local community, library service provision and staff

To inform these changes, a public consultation was conducted between 31 July and 24 October 2025 to gather feedback on three potential options for transforming the service in line with strategic objectives and achieving the required savings. Following consideration of a range of factors, Option B (see below) has been identified as the recommended approach. This option prioritises areas of greatest need, safeguards equitable access in communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation and delivers the necessary savings through a combination of site adjustments, reductions in staffed hours, and central budget efficiencies. It also ensures continued compliance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

The consultation engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community organisations, and residents. Feedback was collected through multiple channels, including 4,403 responses via eConsult, community engagement events, and additional input received by email. These findings have informed the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups, and detailed assessments have been prepared for each affected site.

Recommended Proposal – Option B

- Reduce staffed opening hours across all Council-run libraries, extending self-service opening hours in mitigation where appropriate.
- Seek a community-managed model for Winscombe Library (retaining LibrariesWest access); close if a viable model cannot be agreed.
- Close Worle Library because of building condition issues; provide alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away).
- Deliver c. £30,000 savings annually from the new books and digital resources budget.
- Reduce opening hours at the Healthy Living Centre Library one day a week to align with the lowest usage.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

- Where libraries close, provide alternative access via outreach, developed according to community needs identified through the consultation.

Consultation feedback highlighted potential negative impacts on children and young people, older adults, disabled and neurodivergent residents, low-income households, and rural communities. Mitigations under Option B include targeted staffed hours, extended self-service with safety and accessibility controls, enhanced outreach and mobile provision, retention of Pill Library, support for a community-managed model at Winscombe, and clear pathways to volunteer supported community activities, such as the Home Library Service and digital inclusion support. Stock reductions will be managed through focused collection development, regional resource sharing (LibrariesWest), and increased promotion of eResources

Post consultation update

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the findings from the public consultation held between 31 July 2025 and 24 October 2025. The consultation engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community groups, and residents. Feedback was gathered through multiple channels, including 378 online responses (for The Campus) via eConsult, a community engagement event held in The Campus library, and additional input received via email. The findings have been used to refine the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups.

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

Libraries as Essential Community Resources: The Campus is valued as a safe, inclusive public space that provides access to free learning, social interaction, and other resources. Many respondents acknowledge the importance of libraries as hubs of community engagement, particularly for younger children, elderly, and those experiencing social isolation or economic disadvantage. The staff are repeatedly described as knowledgeable, helpful, and vital to the quality of the service. Interactions with staff are seen as a key element of the library experience, contributing to both practical assistance and overall well-being.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Reducing library opening hours: People with disabilities and mobility challenges suggested they may struggle to reach alternative libraries or navigate locations without reliable transport. Older adults and those unable to drive or afford travel would face barriers if local libraries close or The Campus reduces opening hours. Families and working individuals highlighted that cuts to weekend and evening hours limit access for those with weekday commitments, while parents stressed the importance of services like rhyme time and children’s activities for early literacy and social development. Many users rely on libraries during weekends or evenings. Reducing hours during these times was cited as a barrier for commuters, students, and families seeking to use library spaces after work or during school holidays. Several suggestions emphasized retaining at least one late evening or weekend day with extended hours.

Role of Digital Library Services: - Digital services like BorrowBox received positive feedback, but respondents stressed that they should complement physical libraries rather than replace them. Concerns were expressed about digital solutions excluding those without internet access or confidence in using technology.

Prioritizing Core Library Services: Respondents valued retaining budgets for new books and physical materials, emphasizing their importance to users of all ages. While some support cost-cutting elsewhere, the reduction of book budgets or digital resources is generally opposed, as it undermines the core purpose of library services. There is widespread recognition of libraries as vital learning resources, particularly for school-age children who benefit from exposure to books and cultural activities.

Recommended Proposal for The Campus

Based on feedback received through the consultation we are proposing to revise the opening hours as per the table below. We are committed to introducing self-service facilities, including Wi-Fi printing to allow customers extended access to The Campus library.

Library	Current library opening hours	Proposed library opening hours	Revised library opening hours	Difference	Comments

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Campus Library	67hrs staffed Monday to Friday 9.30am – 8pm Saturday 9.30am – 5pm Sunday 10am – 5pm	49.5 hrs staffed Monday to Friday 9.30am - 6pm Saturday and Sunday 9.30am - 1pm	52hrs staffed Monday to Thursday 9.30am – 6pm Friday 9.30am – 7pm Saturday 9.30am – 2pm Sunday 10am – 2pm	Reduction of 15 staffed hours	Feedback requested a late-night opening on a weekday to cater for people who can't use the library during core hours. Footfall data suggests Friday is the busiest evening.

Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers.

- **Local Charities & Non-Profits:** Many charities rely on libraries as meeting spaces, hubs for outreach programs, or venues. Reducing opening hours could disrupt their ability to engage with the local community effectively.
- **Community Groups:** Groups such as book clubs, job seekers' support groups, digital inclusion programs, often use library space. Reducing opening hours could disrupt their ability to engage with the local community effectively.
- **Children's Services & Family Support:** The library is co-located with a children's centre and alongside two schools and North Somerset People First also have an office on site. The proposed changes will not directly impact any of these partners.
- **Education Providers:** Local schools often rely on libraries for curriculum support, extracurricular activities, and student study spaces. A reduction in staffed hours could limit students' access to books, research materials, and quiet study environments.
- **Social & Health Services:** Libraries often serve as informal access points for health information, social service referrals, and mental health support programs. A reduction in staffed hours could hinder outreach efforts.
- **Employment & Skills Training:** Access to free public wi-fi, printing and online resources will impact on delivery of council employment services. A reduction in staffed hours could make it harder for unemployed or under-skilled individuals to access job support.
- **Local Arts & Cultural Organisations:** Libraries often host arts-related events, writing groups, and cultural activities, enriching community life. Reduced staffed hours could reduce opportunities for cultural engagement.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

- **Public Access to Technology:** Many individuals rely on libraries for free internet access, public computers, printing, online learning, and communication and the library also delivers face to face council services for those who are digitally excluded.

Section 2 – What do we know?

Who is likely to be affected by this project?

Community across North Somerset

Libraries are central to community cohesion, providing access to resources for education, employment, and social interaction. Reduced staffed hours could disproportionately affect individuals who rely on free internet access, books, and quiet study spaces. Those who experience financial hardship may struggle to access information and recreational reading elsewhere, widening inequalities.

Community in a specific area (Campus and surrounds)

Residents who use the library as a gathering place for social inclusion, learning, and support services may struggle to find alternative venues if they are unable to use the potential self-service option. Vulnerable populations, such as residents with no fixed abode, elderly individuals or those with disabilities, may feel isolated due to the loss of a nearby accessible and safe space if they are also unable to use the potential self-service option.

Council Partners

Libraries often collaborate with council services, offering information hubs and assisting in delivering community outreach programs. Reduced staffed hours could mean added strain on other public services, such as job centres and community advice groups, which may need to accommodate displaced library users seeking assistance.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

North Somerset Council Employees

Campus staff may worry about redundancy or job changes, leading to financial and emotional distress. This could also impact employee morale within the wider council, especially if there is concern about further service reductions.

The likely impact on staffing will not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is known. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow at that point. This uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

Service Users

Regular users of library services, including students, job seekers, and families, would have less opportunity to access a key resource for education and development although potentially a new self-service offer would be available. Children could particularly be affected, as libraries play a crucial role in early literacy and access to educational programming.

Commissioned Services

Services that rely on libraries as venues for delivery—such as adult learning programs, digital inclusion initiatives, and literacy workshops—may struggle to find suitable alternatives locally. This disruption could impact service effectiveness and accessibility.

Voluntary/Community Groups

Local voluntary groups often use library spaces for meetings, training, and outreach.

Post consultation update

The feedback highlights a range of equality concerns regarding library access and services. Libraries are essential and inclusive public spaces, serving as community hubs that promote lifelong learning, social interaction, and well-being. Reducing hours,

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

closing libraries, or relying solely on digital services disproportionately impacts vulnerable groups, exacerbating inequalities. Key themes include access barriers for disabled individuals, neurodiverse individuals, working families, older adults, people on low incomes, younger people, and those for whom English is not their first language. Specific concerns relate to physical accessibility, online systems, the need for routine and safe environments, and the disproportionate impact of service changes on marginalized groups. Several respondents highlighted the importance of libraries as safe and comfortable spaces for neurodiverse individuals. One person shared: *'I'm autistic and have ADHD, but the library is one of the indoor places I feel most comfortable outside of my house.'* This illustrates how libraries provide a vital refuge for those who may experience sensory or social challenges elsewhere.

Respondents recognize the need for cost-saving measures but overwhelmingly value The Campus as a vital community resource, especially for education, social inclusion, and equality. Many expressed frustration that budget cuts target library services, which they see as foundational to community well-being. The proposals were criticized for disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations and eroding accessibility. Strong support exists for sustainable solutions that preserve as much service as possible while addressing financial challenges. The importance of The Campus as a community space that offers human connection, comfort, and a tranquil environment, can be summarised in this feedback

I enjoy the ambience and actually speaking to human beings not a machine! it is lovely to be able to choose a book/ books in peace or just sit down and look at a paper or magazine in the warmth of the Library.

What data or evidence do you have to inform this Equality Impact Assessment?

To inform this Equality Impact Assessment, we gathered a range of data sources to ensure a thorough understanding of library usage and community needs. An initial survey was conducted across all branches between 24 March and 18 April 2025, collecting direct insights from library users.

We also analysed historical membership data from the library management system to identify usage trends across the district and incorporated information from council planning teams and wider demographic statistics to reflect the broader community context.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Since the survey, the evidence base has been strengthened with feedback from the recent Library Services Transformation Consultation. This combined data informed the development of final options and recommendations, which will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Who have you consulted with as a part of this project OR who do you plan to consult with?

As part of this project, a twelve-week public consultation was undertaken from 31 July 2025 to 24 October 2025 to explore user needs and assess potential impacts of the proposed options on protected groups. The consultation provided an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community partners, volunteers, and local communities. This process enabled the collection of valuable feedback and ensured that diverse perspectives were considered in decision-making.

Prior to the consultation, a range of data sources was gathered to develop a comprehensive understanding of library usage and community needs. This included a district-wide library survey conducted between 24 March and 18 April 2025 across all branches, to capture insights directly from service users.

To ensure fairness and transparency, the consultation was widely publicised and made accessible to both library users and non-users. Information about the proposals and opportunities to provide feedback was shared through multiple channels. Respondents were invited to comment on the importance of libraries, the potential impact of proposed changes, and suggestions for improvement. This inclusive approach enabled non-users to contribute views on barriers to access, alternative service models, and the wider role of libraries. Of the total responses received, 117 individuals indicated that they do not currently use the library service, demonstrating that the consultation captured perspectives beyond regular users.

Consultation documents and response forms were available in paper format in all libraries and online via the Council's website at <https://n-somerset.inconsult.uk/Libraries/consultationHome>. A total of 4,403 responses were submitted through paper and online questionnaires, supplemented by additional feedback received via email, children's surveys, and informal conversations at drop-in events, bringing overall participation to over 5,000 individuals. Fourteen engagement events were held in libraries and community locations, attended by approximately 186 participants.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Briefings were delivered to all ward members, town and parish councillors, followed by email summaries encouraging wider community engagement. Articles promoting the consultation appeared in the *Town and Parish Digest* throughout the consultation period. Over 200 stakeholders were contacted directly by email and invited to participate as individuals or organisations. Additional coverage included features in *eLife*, distributed to over 100,000 email addresses in August and October. Notifications were sent via the NSC app to 21,000 registered users, and 42,000 North Somerset Library members received email invitations in August and October. Regular updates were posted on social media, and Cllr Solomon participated in an interview on BBC Radio Bristol to raise awareness.

All North Somerset schools were contacted and encouraged to share the consultation with pupils, parents, and carers. The Schools Engagement and Participation Officer also visited schools to speak directly with young people and invite contributions.

This approach reflects the Council's commitment to broad and inclusive engagement and demonstrates the extensive efforts made to raise awareness of the consultation among diverse groups across North Somerset. While it is acknowledged that no engagement process can capture every individual view, significant steps were taken to maximise participation through widespread publicity, social media activity, and prominent signage. Initial evaluation of responses supports the conclusion that awareness of the consultation was widespread.

161 (78.76%) respondents (for The Campus) indicated they had equality-related concerns. This figure may include individuals selecting multiple protected characteristics or fairness issues (e.g., disability, age, sexual orientation, low income), so it does not represent 161 unique individuals but rather the total number of selections.

The high number of equality concerns suggests that proposed changes to opening hours and reductions in the stock budget have broad potential impacts across multiple protected groups and fairness categories. These issues are not confined to a single group but span disability, age, income, sexual orientation, and other vulnerabilities, highlighting the significant role libraries play in supporting inclusive access for diverse community members.

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments: North Somerset Library Service

Are there any gaps in our evidence to support this Equality Impact Assessment? If so, what are the plans to gather this information?

An earlier iteration of this assessment acknowledged that the original small-scale survey, which was not designed to capture the views of children, resulted in gaps in understanding how young people engage with library services and how potential changes might affect them. To address this, the Council implemented a comprehensive approach during the public consultation to engage children, young people, and those working with them. Senior leaders and governors from local schools were contacted directly via email at the outset, and additional outreach included informal discussions with parents and school staff during library visits and engagement events.

The Children's Services Engagement and Participation Team promoted the consultation through social media, with posts widely reshared by community groups, and conducted in-person school visits to support young people in completing questionnaires during VOICE sessions. Some schools also distributed consultation details through their own communication channels. At Pill Library and Children's Centre, engagement extended to childminders, supported by proactive communication and reinforced through library-based activities such as Rhymetime sessions. Further promotion occurred via social media platforms and through the Friends of Pill Library group, which undertook local outreach, including market stalls, social media posts, press coverage, and poster displays. The consultation was additionally publicised through the North Somerset 'Together' network, involving a broad range of community partners. These combined efforts demonstrate the Council's commitment to inclusive engagement and widespread awareness of the consultation opportunity.

In addition, the original survey did not include feedback from non-users of libraries. To address this, the consultation was promoted widely to maximise awareness and provide as many people as possible—including those who do not currently use libraries—with the opportunity to respond.

Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

Will the project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) on any of these groups?

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)		x				x	In the 2021 Census, 19.55% (19.31% + 21.30% + 22.33% + 15.28%) of people in the wards surrounding The Campus identify themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act, having day to day activities limited a little or a lot. At The Campus library 19% (32) of library survey respondents identified as having a physical or mental health condition which impacts their day-to-day life. Therefore, reduced library opening hours library will have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities. <u>Post consultation update</u> 45 people responded asking for disability to be considered as an equalities issue. Respondents highlighted critical issues related to physical and digital accessibility. Disabled individuals who use wheelchairs or cannot drive expressed concerns regarding the reduction in opening hours or potential closure of local libraries, with some emphasizing difficulties in accessing locations further afield

				due to lack of transport. Digital-only services were identified as inaccessible to those with certain disabilities, such as dyslexia or cognitive differences, requiring tailored support. Libraries provide quiet, structured environments that help neurodivergent children and adults focus, build routines, and feel safe. Concerns were also raised about making libraries unstaffed during certain hours, as some individuals require staff assistance to use IT equipment or navigate services effectively.
People from different ethnic groups	x			96% of library survey respondents identified as White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. According to the North Somerset JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) 95.7% of the overall population is White. <u>Post consultation update</u> 7 respondents asked for race to be considered. 2 commented that English is not their first language, but no comments about the impact were included. This assessment remains as none in case those who are affected by the changes

					proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	x			x	68% of library survey respondents were female and 5% of survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act due to pregnancy or maternity. In North Somerset, Census data indicates that 51.4% of the population is women (and 51.43% in surrounding wards), therefore women will be disproportionately affected by reduced opening hours at this branch. <u>Post consultation update</u> 25 (6.61%) people asked for their sex or pregnancy and maternity to be considered. Expecting and new mothers rely on libraries for activities such as rhyme time and as free, warm, and safe spaces to spend time with their children. Reduced access could leave mothers without affordable community spaces, particularly if they lack access to transport.
People who are LGBTQ+	x			x	5% of library survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act, due

				to sexual orientation. The North Somerset Census average was 2.61%, which would indicate a higher impact on LGBTQ+ communities. This is higher usage rate is likely a result of community partner use of library space, rather than a reflection of the average library user. <u>Post consultation update</u> 8 (2.11%) people asked for sexual orientation to be considered. While no explicit issues related to sexual orientation were noted, The Campus was highlighted as a safe, inclusive, and communal space, vital for individuals and communities, including those from the LGBTQ+ community. Removing staffed hours or reducing access could impact the inclusiveness of these environments.
People on a low income	x		x	While we don't hold data on the deprivation level of Weston library service users, we know that 17% of library survey respondents come to the library because they cannot afford internet access at home. Others may not be able to buy books or heat their homes and

				therefore the closure is assessed to have a negative impact on more deprived groups. In the 2021 Census 51.59% (52.1% + 53.37% + 55.63% + 44.25%) of households in the wards surrounding The Campus had one or more dimension deprivation.
				<u>Post consultation update</u>
				Individuals emphasized their reliance on libraries for free access to books, IT, and a safe, warm place to spend time. They also noted the impact on children in economically disadvantaged areas, where libraries provide vital literacy opportunities that cannot be replicated at home. Some noted that digital exclusion remains a concern in impoverished households where access to reliable internet and technology is limited.
People in particular age groups	x		x	Children and elderly are more likely to use the library and are therefore disproportionately impacted by the closure of this site. 9.4% of The Campus library survey respondents indicated they were over 75 years of age.
				<u>Post consultation update</u>

			47 (12.43%) asked for age to be considered as a fairness issue. Older adults and children face significant barriers with these proposed changes. Many older adults rely on The Campus for social interaction, a sense of community, and accessing resources they cannot access online or at home, especially those who do not drive or lack digital literacy. Concerns about isolation and loneliness featured prominently. Young children, who are reliant on caregivers for access, may lose out on the developmental benefits that library activities (e.g., rhyme time) and book borrowing provide, potentially harming early literacy development. The lack of engagement with schools and children in understanding their needs was also noted in the feedback.
People in particular faith groups	x		14 respondents at The Campus library indicated that their religion, belief (or none) needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 6% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u>

					8 (2.11%) people asked for religion to be considered. No specific comments about the impact were included. This assessment remains as none in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People who are married or in a civil partnership		x			Only 10 respondents at The Campus library indicated that being married or in a civil partnership needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 3% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 9 (2.38%) people asked that marital status is considered as an equality issue. No specific comments about the impact were included. This assessment remains as none in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.

People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x		Library survey responses indicate that only 1% of library users identified as being a different gender to the one assigned at birth, with 3% preferring not to say. At The Campus library, 9 respondents identified their gender as being different to the one assigned at birth and therefore any impacts are deemed negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 6 (1.59%) asked that gender reassignment is considered. Individuals undergoing or considering gender reassignment raised issues of safety in accessing public spaces, including libraries. Unsocial hours or relying on unstaffed services could increase safety risks for these users, discouraging them from accessing libraries entirely. Having welcoming, staffed library spaces is critical to ensuring their access is safe and supportive.
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents.	x		We do not hold data for these groups; however, knowledge of the local community would indicate that these groups are not highly represented in this area. As part of the

Please specify:

consultation process, we intend to gather more detailed data and better understand the potential impact on these groups—particularly unpaid carers—to ensure their needs and perspectives are fully considered.

Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other budget savings? Yes

Changes made through implementing the recommendations of the outcome of the Library Service Transformation Consultation will enable operational changes to be made at the Campus, contributing to the MTFP savings requirement shown below:

		Budget reduction (£)		
Budget Reference	Budget Proposal	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
CHS09	Campus - reduce cost to become cost neutral over the next two years	130		

Section 4 – Options

What other options have been considered?

Do nothing. The Council has declared a financial emergency: this option is not feasible as transformation is required to achieve the £433k revenue savings target included in the Council's MTFP and helps ensure that we continue to deliver sustainable services with our communities.

Consider adopting either Option A or Option C, as presented in the consultation. These options were rejected in favour of option B for the reasons outlined in section 1 of the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Section 5 – Action Plan

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	Provide training in using digital resources. Commit to introducing self-service opening, subject to completion of a comprehensive risk assessment. If any changes to space are required to facilitate self service facilities an access audit will be undertaken. Evans Guide will be updated to promote times for neurodiverse individuals who prefer quiet times. Increase awareness of Blue Badge parking bays outside The Campus. Review seating next to the entrance. Offer guided library tours for first time visitors. Signpost those unable to access the library independently to community-based activities, supported by volunteers e.g. home library service.	Emma Wellard	TBC
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	Commit to introducing self-service opening, subject to completion of a comprehensive risk assessment.	Emma Wellard	TBC

	Improve the early years offer e.g. explore additional pre-school activities to support maternal mental health and opportunities to connect and potentially improve the facilities for younger children and families in the library.		
People who are LGBTQ+	Ensure that the library continues to be visibly inclusive, with signage, displays, and resources that affirm LGBTQ+ identities, even if physical access is reduced.	Emma Wellard	TBC
People on a low income	Continue to offer free access to Wi-Fi, computers and the council services telephone during self-service hours. Commit to introducing self-service facilities, including wi-fi printing, subject to completion of a comprehensive risk assessment. Continue to support residents seeking access to Council services when the main Campus reception is staffed. Signpost digital skills support. Increase promotion of eResources to reduce the need to travel. Promote safe walking / cycle routes to site. Promote and provide volunteering opportunities, as a potential route into employment.	Emma Wellard	TBC

People in particular age groups	Provide and signpost training in using digital resources. Commit to introducing self-service opening, subject to completion of a comprehensive risk assessment.	Emma Wellard	TBC

If after planned actions you anticipate negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with those effected?

We will work with the corporate communications team on a wider communication strategy for all the changes resulting from the medium-term financial plan savings target. This will be enacted once a Decision on a way forward has been made.

Section 6 – Monitoring

What are the governance arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actions listed above and the actual impact on protected or significant groups?

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

Section 7 – Publish the Assessment

How will you publish this Equality Impact Assessment?

A comprehensive version of the Equality Impact Assessment will be made available on a dedicated webpage. This will include downloadable documents and contact information for further inquiries or feedback.

Hard copies will be made available through local libraries so that individuals without internet access can review the materials.

These measures are intended to provide broad public access and encourage informed participation in the consultation process.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) -Clevedon Library

1. The Project

Directorate:	Corporate Services
Service area:	Libraries
Lead Officer:	Emma Wellard
Date:	July 2025
Review date:	November 2025
Updated:	December 2025

Updated Post Recommendation Report: January 2026

Description of the project:

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget.

Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Pill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided; and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual budget for new books and digital resources.

Summary of changes:

To meet these savings targets, the option presented to the public consultation in summer 2025 included a proposal to change the opening hours at Clevedon library. The proposed change involved closing at 12:30 instead of 13:00 on Saturdays. This document assesses the equalities impacts this change would have on the local community, library service provision and staff.

Following the consultation on the proposal to reduce opening hours by closing 30 minutes earlier on Saturdays, and after reviewing stakeholder feedback alongside further analysis of footfall data, the recommendation regarding opening hours has been revised. Rather than reducing Saturday hours, it is recommended that Clevedon Library opens at 10:00 on Tuesdays instead of 09:30. As well as responding to customer feedback, this adjustment also enhances clarity for customers by standardising the later opening time. Currently, libraries open later once a month for staff meetings, which requires separate communication. By adopting a consistent later opening on Tuesdays, the need for additional messaging is removed.

Post consultation update

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the findings from the public consultation held between 31 July 2025 and 24 October 2025. The consultation engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community groups, and residents. Feedback was gathered through multiple channels, including 664 online responses (for Clevedon) via eConsult, two community engagement events held in Clevedon library, and additional input received via email. The findings have been used to refine the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups.

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

Importance of Libraries for Community and Wellbeing: Clevedon Library is seen as a vital community hub, offering education, social contact, and a safe space for both children and adults. Respondents emphasized that libraries help reduce social isolation, especially as other local services like shops and banks are closing.

Concerns About Service Reductions: While minimal changes to opening hours at Clevedon library may have limited impact for some users, reductions in overall services—such as book stock funding—are viewed as highly detrimental. Funding for new books is considered a priority to maintain quality and relevance of library collections. Reduced book budgets could lead to longer waiting times for new titles, which some users find acceptable, but others see as diminishing the library's value.

Staffed Hours and Accessibility: Staffed hours are critical for users at Clevedon library who need support and cannot adapt easily to self-service systems. While some respondents welcome increased self-service times, others stress that reducing staffed hours risks excluding vulnerable groups.

Opposition to Closures and Cuts: Strong opposition was expressed to any library closures, even where alternative sites exist, due to the impact on those unable to travel far. Respondents criticized the idea of prioritizing other council spending over library services, highlighting libraries as essential for education and community wellbeing.

Although changes to opening hours may have minimal immediate effect, broader service reductions—such as cuts to book stock funding and staffed hours—pose significant risks. Reduced budgets for new titles could limit access to current materials, diminishing the library's role in education and lifelong learning. Lower staffed hours may exclude users who rely on in-person support, particularly those who struggle with digital systems or have additional needs. Any future closures or substantial cuts could erode the library's function as a vital community hub, increasing social isolation and reducing access to safe, inclusive spaces for study, social contact, and wellbeing.

2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the changes proposed in this project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) for any of these groups?

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type	
	H	M	L	N	+	-
Disabled people (Including the consideration of neurodiversity)			x			
People from different ethnic groups			x			
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)			x			
People who are LGBTQ+			x			
People on a low income			x			
People in particular age groups			x			
People in particular faith groups			x			
People who are married or in a civil partnership			x			

People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x		
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:	x		

3. Explanation of customer impact

The decision to reduce library opening hours by 30 minutes has been assessed as having a low impact on protected groups. This is because the change represents a minimal reduction in service hours, occurring at a time when footfall data shows that usage is typically lower. Protected groups are unlikely to be disproportionately affected. Digital services and weekend opening hours, remain available to support continued inclusion and accessibility and Extended Access will be extended by 30 mins to retain access to the library for registered members during the reduced hours.

Please describe how you will communicate these changes to those impacted.

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

4. Staff equality impact summary

Are there any staffing implications for this proposal?

Yes

Explanation of staff impact

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. The likely impact on staffing will not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is confirmed. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow, which will affect the whole service. This uncertainty could impact employee morale and increase stress.

5. Cumulative equality impacts

Is this project linked to or likely to have an impact on any other service areas?

The options for Clevedon library form part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset. While the impact at this library is minimal, not implementing the changes (reduction in opening hours) would result in a greater negative impact at other libraries.

6. Action Plan

Are there any further actions that should be taken because of this Equality Impact Assessment?

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Reduced staffed hours	To help reduce the impact of opening at 10:00 on Tuesday's we propose extending and promoting self-service opening	Emma Wellard	March 2026

	hours. This would allow continued access to key library resources such as book borrowing, computer use, and study spaces outside of staffed hours. While this does not fully replace the benefits of staffed services and community activities, it may help maintain a level of accessibility—particularly for those who rely on the library outside of standard working hours.		

6. Review and Sign Off

Service Manager Review

This updated impact assessment reflects the findings from the public consultation and the revised decision on opening hours. The initial assessment was based on the potential changes outlined in the consultation document; this version incorporates feedback received and the outcome of the consultation process.

Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed?

No

Service Manager:

Emma Wellard

Date:

12 January 2026

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Healthy Living Centre Library

Directorate	Corporate Services
Service area:	Libraries
Lead Officer:	Emma Wellard
Review date:	November 2025
Updated post consultation:	December 2025
Updated Post Recommendation Report:	January 2026

Equality Impacts

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget. Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Pill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided; and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual

budget for new books and digital resources.

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

The Project

Background to project

The North Somerset Libraries Strategy (2021) outlines the requirement for libraries to adapt in response to evolving demand and financial pressures while continuing to meet statutory obligations. The Council's approved Medium Term Financial Plan, effective from April 2026, includes a 19% reduction in the Library Service budget (approximately £433,000), necessitating changes to service delivery.

To meet these savings targets, the option agreed to go to public consultation in summer 2025 included a proposal to close Worle library. The community are invited to help shape the offer locally. This document is designed to assess the equalities impacts this will have on the local community, library service provision and staff.

To inform these changes, a public consultation was conducted between 31 July and 24 October 2025 to gather feedback on three potential options for transforming the service in line with strategic objectives and achieving the required savings. Following consideration of a range of factors, Option B (see below) has been identified as the recommended approach. This option prioritises areas of greatest need, safeguards equitable access in communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation and delivers the necessary savings through a combination of site adjustments, reductions in staffed hours, and central budget efficiencies. It also ensures continued compliance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

The consultation engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community organisations, and residents. Feedback was collected through multiple channels, including 4,403 responses via eConsult, community engagement events, and additional input received by email. These findings have informed the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups, and detailed assessments have been prepared for each affected site.

Recommended Proposal – Option B

Reduce staffed opening hours across all Council-run libraries, extending self-service opening hours in mitigation where appropriate.

- Seek a community-managed model for Winscombe Library (retaining LibrariesWest access); close if a viable model cannot be agreed.
- Close Worle Library because of building condition issues; provide alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away).
- Deliver c. £30,000 savings annually from the new books and digital resources budget.
- Reduce opening hours at the Healthy Living Centre Library one day a week to align with the lowest usage. Based on recent footfall data, closing on Tuesday rather than Monday is recommended.
- Where libraries close, provide alternative access via outreach, developed according to community needs identified through the consultation.

Consultation feedback highlighted potential negative impacts on children and young people, older adults, disabled and neurodivergent residents, low-income households, and rural communities. Mitigations under Option B include targeted staffed hours, extended self-service with safety and accessibility controls, enhanced outreach and mobile provision, retention of Pill Library, support for a community-managed model at Winscombe, and clear pathways to volunteer supported community activities, such as the Home Library Service and digital inclusion support. Stock reductions will be managed through focused collection development, regional resource sharing (LibrariesWest), and increased promotion of eResources

Post consultation update

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the findings and feedback from the public consultation held between 31 July 2025 and 24 October 2025. The consultation engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community groups, and residents. Feedback was gathered through multiple channels, including 113 online responses (for Healthy Living Centre Library) via eConsult, a community engagement event held in the Healthy Living Centre library, and additional input received via email. The findings have been used to refine the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups.

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

Accessibility for Vulnerable Groups: Many users with physical or learning disabilities, mobility challenges, or conditions like Alzheimer's rely on the Healthy Living Centre library as an easily accessible space for both support and community engagement. For example, one individual with cancer emphasized the need for the library as essential due to limited mobility.

Digital Exclusion: Users without access to computers, printers, or the internet at home rely on the library to bridge the digital divide. Reduced staffing and hours would disproportionately impact those who need help operating digital technology or completing online tasks.

Older Persons: Elderly individuals expressed the importance of libraries as places of social interaction and mental stimulation. Comments like *"It makes me come out of the house at the age of 90"* underscore the psychological and social role libraries play.

Support for Educational Needs: Libraries are critical for literacy development, educational support, and after-school or holiday activities. Parents and caregivers expressed concerns about fewer options for constructive activities if library services are reduced. Home-educated children and those tutored rely heavily on libraries for learning materials and a conducive environment. Services

like Rhymetime for babies and literacy programs for adults, such as Read Easy North Somerset, emphasize the educational value of libraries, which could be jeopardized by cuts. The Healthy Living Centre library is also valued as a quiet study space for students.

Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion: Libraries are vital spaces for bringing people together, combating isolation, and fostering community. Many users value libraries as one of the few remaining public places to interact with others, particularly those isolated by age, disability, or financial hardship. The library is recognised as a hub for various demographic groups, including individuals with learning disabilities or mental health challenges. Frequent mention of positive interactions with librarians and staff highlights the library's role as a trusted and safe environment necessary for feeling supported and included.

Financial and Geographical Barriers: Low-income households, who may struggle to afford books or IT access, often depend heavily on libraries for free access to essential services and resources. One respondent noted that in a town where 48.5% of households face deprivation, libraries play a critical role in reducing inequality. Many users mentioned long distances to alternative libraries and the difficulty of traveling without cars, especially for those living in rural areas or relying on limited bus services.

Reduced operating hours exacerbate these challenges.

Impact on Mental Health and Well-being: Libraries are seen as safe spaces that foster emotional well-being. Several comments cited their role in serving as quiet, relaxing environments and their ability to connect individuals with others socially. By offering activities, books, and human interaction, libraries help counter loneliness and isolation, both of which have been linked to poor mental health outcomes.

The Importance of Staff and Personalized Support: Respondents highlighted the critical role of library staff in providing IT help, guidance, and encouragement — from assisting with forms and emails to creating personalized reading challenges for children. Increased reliance on unstaffed hours would significantly impact users needing in-person support, particularly those with disabilities or limited digital skills.

Broader Community Impact: Ripple Effect on Community Hubs: Libraries serve as more than just places for borrowing books; they are critical community hubs connecting individuals to resources, community groups, and each other. Respondents expressed concern that changes to services risk destabilizing the broader social infrastructure.

Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers.

- **Local Charities & Non-Profits:** Many charities rely on libraries as meeting spaces, hubs for outreach programs, or venues. Reducing the library opening hours could disrupt their ability to engage with the local community effectively.
- **Children's Services & Family Support:** A children's centre is located within the For All Healthy Living Centre, whilst access is via the library, a separate entrance is available.
- **Education Providers:** Local schools often rely on libraries for curriculum support, extracurricular activities, and student study spaces. Reduced opening hours could limit students' access to books, research materials, and quiet study environments.
- **Social & Health Services:** Libraries often serve as informal access points for health information, social service referrals, and mental health support programs. Reduced opportunities to use this space could hinder outreach efforts.
- **Employment & Skills Training:** Access to free public wi-fi, printing and online resources will impact on delivery of council employment services. Fewer opening hours will make it harder for unemployed or under-skilled individuals to access job support and community groups delivering outreach in this area.
- **Local Arts & Cultural Organisations:** Libraries often host arts-related events, writing groups, and cultural activities, enriching community life. Reduced opportunities to use this space could hinder cultural engagement.
- **Public Access to Technology:** Many individuals rely on libraries for free internet access, public computers, printing, online learning, and communication and the library also delivers face to face council services for those who are digitally excluded. The reduction in opening hours will limit digital inclusion and make accessing essential online services and Council services more difficult for the most disadvantaged.

Section 2 – What do we know?

Who is likely to be affected by this project?

Community in a specific area (South Ward Weston-super-Mare and surrounds)

Libraries are central to community cohesion, providing access to resources for education, employment, and social interaction. Reduced hours could disproportionately affect individuals who rely on free internet access, books, and quiet study spaces. Those who experience financial hardship may struggle to access information and recreational reading elsewhere, widening inequalities.

Residents may find it harder to coordinate visits to the library with other services in the centre (e.g., children's centre, GP facilities).

Council Partners

Libraries often collaborate with council services, offering information hubs and assisting in delivering community outreach programs. Libraries provide support and signposting to North Somerset residents who are unable to access council services online. For complex enquiries, staff direct residents to a dedicated council services phone located within the library, ensuring access to the appropriate specialist support.

Reduced library opening hours could mean added strain on other public services, such as council call centre, job centres and community advice groups.

North Somerset Council Employees

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. The likely impact on staffing will not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is known. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing

consultation is likely to follow at that point which will affect the whole service. This uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

Service Users

Regular users of library services, including students, job seekers, and families, would have reduced opportunities to engage with education and development. Children could particularly suffer, as libraries play a crucial role in early literacy and access to educational programming.

Voluntary/Community Groups

Local voluntary groups often use library spaces for meetings, training, and outreach. The reduction in opening hours of this venue could limit their ability to function effectively, reducing opportunities for community engagement and collaboration.

The reduction in library opening hours may have social and economic repercussions, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities

Post consultation update

The consultation confirmed that the Healthy Living Centre library is deeply valued by the community as a space that provides support, resources, and opportunities that are often inaccessible elsewhere. It is appreciated for fostering literacy and education, especially for children and young people, through reading programs, clubs, and study spaces. Many respondents emphasized the importance of interacting with knowledgeable and supportive staff who provide crucial assistance with digital tasks, forms, and educational guidance. The library is also cherished as a safe, quiet environment for relaxation and connection, whether through community activities or simply being in the presence of others. As one individual noted, *"They are one of the last places you can go to speak to a human, and the staff are very kind and helpful,"* highlighting the unique role libraries play in creating a sense of belonging and mutual support.

Reducing library opening hours at the Healthy Living Centre would significantly impact vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly, disabled individuals, and low-income households, by limiting access to essential educational resources, digital support, and safe spaces for social interaction. Parents and caregivers voiced concerns about fewer options for constructive activities for children, while others highlighted how reduced hours would exacerbate digital exclusion and isolation, especially for those reliant on staff assistance or unable to travel easily. The changes could also hinder the libraries' ability to serve as critical community hubs, promoting equality, mental well-being, and learning. As one respondent put it, *"Without libraries, both households and communities face significant challenges... education, personal development, and community progress slow down."*

What data or evidence do you have to inform this Equality Impact Assessment?

To inform this Equality Impact Assessment, we gathered a range of data sources to ensure a thorough understanding of library usage and community needs. An initial survey was conducted across all branches between 24 March and 18 April 2025, collecting direct insights from library users.

We also analysed historical membership data from the library management system to identify usage trends across the district and incorporated information from council planning teams and wider demographic statistics to reflect the broader community context.

Since the survey, the evidence base has been strengthened with feedback from the recent Library Services Transformation Consultation. This combined data informed the development of final options and recommendations, which will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Who have you consulted with as a part of this project OR who do you plan to consult with?

As part of this project, a twelve-week public consultation was undertaken from 31 July 2025 to 24 October 2025 to explore user needs and assess potential impacts of the proposed options on protected groups. The consultation provided an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community partners, volunteers, and local

communities. This process enabled the collection of valuable feedback and ensured that diverse perspectives were considered in decision-making.

Prior to the consultation, a range of data sources was gathered to develop a comprehensive understanding of library usage and community needs. This included a district-wide library survey conducted between 24 March and 18 April 2025 across all branches, to capture insights directly from service users.

To ensure fairness and transparency, the consultation was widely publicised and made accessible to both library users and non-users. Information about the proposals and opportunities to provide feedback was shared through multiple channels. Respondents were invited to comment on the importance of libraries, the potential impact of proposed changes, and suggestions for improvement. This inclusive approach enabled non-users to contribute views on barriers to access, alternative service models, and the wider role of libraries. Of the total responses received, 117 individuals indicated that they do not currently use the library service, demonstrating that the consultation captured perspectives beyond regular users.

Consultation documents and response forms were available in paper format in all libraries and online via the Council's website at <https://n-somerset.inconsult.uk/Libraries/consultationHome>. A total of 4,403 responses were submitted through paper and online questionnaires, supplemented by additional feedback received via email, children's surveys, and informal conversations at drop-in events, bringing overall participation to over 5,000 individuals. Fourteen engagement events were held in libraries and community locations, attended by approximately 186 participants.

Briefings were delivered to all ward members, town and parish councillors, followed by email summaries encouraging wider community engagement. Articles promoting the consultation appeared in the *Town and Parish Digest* throughout the consultation period. Over 200 stakeholders were contacted directly by email and invited to participate as individuals or organisations. Additional coverage included features in *eLife*, distributed to over 100,000 email addresses in August and October. Notifications were sent via the NSC app to 21,000 registered users, and 42,000 North Somerset Library members received email invitations in August and October. Regular updates were posted on social media, and Cllr Solomon participated in an interview on BBC Radio Bristol to raise awareness.

All North Somerset schools were contacted and encouraged to share the consultation with pupils, parents, and carers. The Schools Engagement and Participation Officer also visited schools to speak directly with young people and invite contributions.

This approach reflects the Council's commitment to broad and inclusive engagement and demonstrates the extensive efforts made to raise awareness of the consultation among diverse groups across North Somerset. While it is acknowledged that no engagement process can capture every individual view, significant steps were taken to maximise participation through widespread publicity, social media activity, and prominent signage. Initial evaluation of responses supports the conclusion that awareness of the consultation was widespread.

89 (78.76%) respondents (for Healthy Living Centre library) indicated they had equality-related concerns. This figure may include individuals selecting multiple protected characteristics or fairness issues (e.g., disability, age, sexual orientation, low income), so it does not represent 89 unique individuals but rather the total number of selections.

The high number of equality concerns suggests that the proposed changes to opening hours and reduction in the stock budget has broad potential impacts across multiple protected groups and fairness categories.

Equality issues are not isolated to one group; they span disability, age, income, sexual orientation, and other vulnerabilities, indicating that the library plays a significant role in supporting inclusive access for diverse community members.

Are there any gaps in our evidence to support this Equality Impact Assessment? If so, what are the plans to gather this information?

An earlier iteration of this assessment acknowledged that the original small-scale survey, which was not designed to capture the views of children, resulted in gaps in understanding how young people engage with library services and how potential changes might affect them. To address this, the Council implemented a comprehensive approach during the public consultation to engage children, young people, and those working with them. Senior leaders and governors from local schools were contacted directly via email at the outset, and additional outreach included informal discussions with parents and school staff during library visits and engagement events.

The Children's Services Engagement and Participation Team promoted the consultation through social media, with posts widely reshared by community groups, and conducted in-person school visits to support young people in completing questionnaires during VOICE sessions. Some schools also distributed consultation details through their own communication channels. At Pill Library and Children's Centre, engagement extended to childminders, supported by proactive communication and reinforced through library-based activities such as Rhymetime sessions. Further promotion occurred via social media platforms and through the Friends of Pill Library group, which undertook local outreach, including market stalls, social media posts, press coverage, and poster displays. The consultation was additionally publicised through the North Somerset 'Together' network, involving a broad range of community partners. These combined efforts demonstrate the Council's commitment to inclusive engagement and widespread awareness of the consultation opportunity.

In addition, the original survey did not include feedback from non-users of libraries. To address this, the consultation was promoted widely to maximise awareness and provide as many people as possible—including those who do not currently use libraries—with the opportunity to respond.

Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

Will the project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) on any of these groups?

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)		x				x	In the 2021 Census , 25.82% of people in Weston-super-Mare South identify themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act, having day to day activities limited a little or a lot. At the Healthy Living

Centre library 38.4% (12) of library survey respondents identified as having a physical or mental health condition which impacts their day-to-day life. Therefore, reduced opening hours of the library will have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities.

Post consultation update

28 (24.78%) respondents asked for disability to be considered as an equality issue.

Users with mobility impairments, including those who use mobility scooters or have physical disabilities, rely on libraries that are close to parking and easy to access.

Limited opening hours may make it harder for those who need extra time or flexibility to visit.

Neurodiverse users (including those with dyslexia, ADHD, autism, and photophobia) find noisy or crowded spaces challenging and require quiet, calm environments.

Bright lights and overstimulation can prevent some users from using self-service systems, making staffed hours essential.

Individuals with visual impairments, learning difficulties, and physical disabilities often highlighted the need for staff assistance for reading, typing, hearing, and using computers.

Self-service-only periods risk excluding those who cannot navigate technology independently.

Reducing staffed hours and limiting opening times could significantly disadvantage disabled users who rely on personal assistance and flexible access. Those with mobility impairments may struggle to reach alternative libraries, while neurodiverse individuals and people with sensory sensitivities face barriers in noisy or crowded environments. Increased reliance on self-service systems risks excluding users with visual impairments, learning difficulties, or physical disabilities who cannot navigate technology independently. Overall, these changes may reduce accessibility and inclusivity, making the library less welcoming for those who depend on them most.

People from different ethnic groups	x			87.7% of library survey respondents identified as White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. According to the North Somerset JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) 95.7% of the overall population is White. This is notably lower than the North Somerset population average and differs from the average across all other library sites, where 96% of respondents identified within this group. <u>Post consultation update</u> 5 (4.42%) respondents asked for race to be considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment has been changed from none to low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	x		x	75% of library survey respondents were female and 5% of survey respondents

			identified as being protected under the Equalities Act due to pregnancy or maternity. In North Somerset, Census data indicates that 51.4% of the population is women (and 51.93% in Weston-super-Mare South), therefore women will be disproportionately affected by reduced opening hours at this branch. <u>Post consultation update</u> 9 respondents asked for their sex, or pregnancy and maternity to be considered for fairness. No specific comments were included. This assessment has been changed from high to medium in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People who are LGBTQ+	x	x	4% of library survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act, due to sexual orientation. The North Somerset Census average was 2.61%, which would indicate a higher impact on LGBTQ+ communities. This is higher usage rate is likely a result of community partner

				use of library space, rather than a reflection of the average library user. <u>Post consultation update</u> 5 (4.42%) respondents asked for sexual orientation to be considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment has been changed from high to medium in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People on a low income	x		x	While we don't hold data on the deprivation level of Healthy Living Centre library service users, we know that 17% of library survey respondents come to the library because they cannot afford internet access at home. Others may not be able to buy books or heat their homes and therefore the reduction in opening hours is assessed to have a negative impact on more deprived groups. In the 2021 Census 66.2% of households in Weston-super-Mare South had one or more dimension deprivation. <u>Post consultation update</u>

			Reducing library opening hours could disproportionately impact low-income families by limiting access to free resources such as books, internet, and study spaces. For those experiencing economic disadvantage, the library is mentioned as a lifeline for education, digital access, and community support. Any reduction in availability risks widening inequalities and reducing opportunities for those who cannot afford alternatives. A number of respondents pointed out the inequity in digital access. Households without internet, computers, or printers rely on libraries to bridge this gap. Reduced hours would unfairly impact those less able to afford or access digital services elsewhere, furthering the divide between digitally equipped and underserved populations.
People in particular age groups	x	x	Children and elderly are more likely to use the library and are therefore disproportionately impacted by the closure of this site. A significant number of

			children unaccompanied by parents or carers use the library. Data for under 16's was not collected in the recent equalities survey. <u>Post consultation update</u> 22 (19.47%) people asked for age to be considered as an equality issue. Reducing library opening hours would disproportionately impact children and older adults, who rely on libraries for education, social interaction, and wellbeing. For young children, libraries provide crucial literacy support and structured activities, while for elderly they serve as a lifeline against isolation and a source of mental engagement. Limited hours could exacerbate inequalities by restricting access for those with mobility challenges or without affordable alternatives, making age a significant factor in decisions about service changes.
People in particular faith groups	x		Only 2 respondents at the Healthy Living Centre library indicated that their religion, belief (or none) needed to be considered

				under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 6% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 6 (5.31%) respondents asked for religion to be considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as no impact on this group in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People who are married or in a civil partnership		x		Only 2 respondents at the Healthy Living Centre library indicated that being married or in a civil partnership needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 3% and therefore impacts are considered negligible <u>Post consultation update</u> 4 (3.54%) requested being married or in a civil partnership is considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as no impact on this group in case those who are affected by the changes

				proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x			Library survey responses indicate that only 1% of library users identified as being a different gender to the one assigned at birth, with 3% preferring not to say. At the Healthy Living Centre library, no respondents identified their gender as being different to the one assigned at birth and therefore any impacts are deemed negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 5 (4.42%) people indicated gender reassignment should be considered as a fairness issue. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as no impact on this group in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents.	x			We do not hold data for these groups; however, knowledge of the local community would indicate that these groups are not highly represented in this

Please specify:			area. As part of the consultation process, we intend to gather more detailed data and better understand the potential impact on these groups—particularly unpaid carers—to ensure their needs and perspectives are fully considered. <u>Post consultation update</u> 5 (4.42%) people asked for care experienced to be considered. No specific comments were included. Working individuals highlighted that reduced hours, especially during evenings or outside office hours, would disproportionately affect them or parents with limited flexibility. These groups may find it nearly impossible to visit the library, negatively impacting their ability to engage with library services and undermining the fairness of access.

Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other budget savings? **Yes**

This option to reduce the opening hours at this library forms part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset and any mitigations implemented to reduce the equalities impacts of this option may increase costs in other areas of the library and council services (for example outreach costs).

Section 4 – Options

What other options have been considered?

Do nothing. The Council has declared a financial emergency: this option is not feasible as transformation is required to achieve the £433k revenue savings target included in the Council's MTFP and helps ensure that we continue to deliver sustainable services with our communities.

Consider adopting either Option A or Option C, as presented in the consultation. These options were rejected in favour of option B for the reasons outlined in section 1 of the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Section 5 – Action Plan (reduce opening hours)

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	Signpost residents who struggle to access the library on open days to community-based activities that, while outside statutory provision, support engagement and access to resources.	Emma Wellard	TBC

	These activities e.g. home library service will be delivered in partnership with local organisations, charities, and community groups, and may be supported by volunteers to ensure sustainability and reach. Provide digital training to support residents to confidently access digital resources.		
Women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	Explore options with Family Hubs	Emma Wellard	TBC
People who are LGBTQ+	Work with existing partnerships and networks to deliver targeted support to these groups.	Emma Wellard	TBC
People on a low income	Explore self-service opening at lunchtimes and on the proposed closed day, providing access to books, resources, Wi-Fi, computers and the council services telephone.	Emma Wellard	TBC
People in particular age groups – children and elderly	Provide clear communication to inform users about the changes to opening hours.	Emma Wellard	TBC

	Collaborate with local partnerships to provide safe, supervised spaces for children on a closed day.		

If after planned actions you anticipate negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

Impacts of the reduction of access to Council services for digitally excluded customers cannot be entirely mitigated by community partners (who may or may not wish to support this). This is due to the required levels of data protection and knowledge of council services and teams required to offer this support.

While the Council will continue to deliver Library services in alternative ways when the Healthy Living Centre Library reduces its opening hours, the wider benefits of accessing Library services through a physical building—and the social connection this brings—will be diminished. This reduction in face-to-face access may contribute to increased social isolation, loneliness, and reduced community cohesion, as well as potentially exacerbating deprivation in the local area.

Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with those effected?

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

Section 6 – Monitoring

What are the governance arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actions listed above and the actual impact on protected or significant groups?

A full plan will be put in place once the outcome of the consultation is known and a decision made on a way forward.

Section 7 – Publish the Assessment

How will you publish this Equality Impact Assessment?

A comprehensive version of the Equality Impact Assessment will be made available on a dedicated webpage. This will include downloadable documents and contact information for further inquiries or feedback.

Hard copies will be distributed to local libraries to ensure that individuals without internet access can review the materials.

These measures are intended to provide broad public access and encourage informed participation in the consultation process.



Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Nailsea Library

1. The Project

Directorate:	Corporate Services
Service area:	Libraries
Lead Officer:	Emma Wellard
Date:	July 2025
Review date:	November 2025
Updated:	December 2025

Updated Post Recommendation Report: January 2026

Description of the project:

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget.

Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Pill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided; and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual budget for new books and digital resources.

Summary of changes:

To meet these savings targets, the option presented to the public consultation in summer 2025 included a proposal to change the opening hours at Nailsea library. The proposed change involved closing at 17:00 instead of 18:00 on Tuesdays and 12:30 instead of 13:00 on Saturdays. This document assesses the equalities impacts this will have on the local community, library service provision and staff.

Following the consultation on the proposal to reduce opening hours by closing one hour earlier on Tuesdays and 30 minutes earlier on Saturdays, and after reviewing stakeholder feedback alongside further analysis of footfall data, the recommendation regarding opening hours has been revised. Rather than reducing Saturday hours, it is recommended that Nailsea library opens from 10:00 to 17:00 on Tuesdays. As well as responding to customer feedback, this adjustment also enhances clarity for customers by

standardising the later opening time. Currently, libraries open later once a month for staff meetings, which requires separate communication. By adopting a consistent later opening on Tuesdays, the need for additional messaging is removed.

Post consultation update

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the findings from the public consultation held between 31 July 2025 and 24 October 2025. The consultation engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community groups, and residents. Feedback was gathered through multiple channels, including 717 online responses (for Nailsea) via eConsult, two community engagement events held in Nailsea library, and additional input received via email. The findings have been used to refine the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups.

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

Protection of Library Services: Nailsea residents expressed a strong emphasis on keeping as many libraries under council control as possible to ensure the sustainability of services. Community-run models are viewed as less reliable in the long term.

Value Beyond Books: Nailsea library is not just a place for books; it is seen as a vital resource for education, community cohesion, mental health, and as a refuge for vulnerable populations.

Impact of Service Reductions: Reduced stock funds and cuts to staffing hours impact the quality of services offered, particularly access to books, expertise, and support, with significant concern for vulnerable users.

Accessibility and Inclusivity: Nailsea library serves people from all demographics, including low-income families, disabled individuals, and those without private transportation. Reduced services risk impacting these groups disproportionately.

Self-service Concerns: Unstaffed libraries, whether due to schedule changes or reductions in staff availability, raised safety and usability concerns for some users, particularly for those with complex needs or additional support requirements. Although, many welcomed the option to use the library outside of staffed hours.

The proposed changes to library services including reduced opening hours at Nailsea library and potential reductions in stock funds, would have several key impacts on users. While minimal changes to opening hours may not significantly inconvenience some users, reduced availability of staff and resources would disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, including those with additional needs, individuals with limited income, and those reliant on libraries for literacy development, social interaction, and mental health support. Libraries are regarded as critical community hubs offering educational opportunities, social cohesion, and a refuge for those in need. There is considerable concern that reductions in budgets for new books and staffing would weaken the library network's ability to serve these diverse needs, potentially exacerbating inequality. Suggestions to mitigate impacts include enhancing self-service options, fostering community engagement through events, and refining online systems for accessibility.

Overall, stakeholders emphasize the value of Nailsea library and the wider service as more than just repositories of books—they are essential pillars of community well-being and equity.

6.9. Customer equality impact summary

Will the changes proposed in this project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) for any of these groups?

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type	
	H	M	L	N	+	-
Disabled people (Including the consideration of neurodiversity)			x			

People from different ethnic groups	x		
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)	x		
People who are LGBTQ+	x		
People on a low income	x		
People in particular age groups	x		
People in particular faith groups	x		
People who are married or in a civil partnership	x		
People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x		
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:	x		

3. Explanation of customer impact

The decision to reduce opening hours has been assessed as having a low impact on protected groups. This is because the change represents a minimal reduction in service hours, occurring at a time when footfall data shows that usage is typically lower. Protected groups are unlikely to be disproportionately affected. Digital services and weekend opening hours, remain available to support continued inclusion and accessibility. Extended Access hours will be extended to enable customers registered to use the service to continue to access the service when it would previously have been staffed.

Please describe how you will communicate these changes to those impacted.

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

4. Staff equality impact summary

Are there any staffing implications for this proposal? Yes

Explanation of staff impact

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. The likely impact on staffing will not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is confirmed. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow at that point which will affect the whole service. This uncertainty could impact employee morale and increase stress.

5. Cumulative equality impacts

Is this project linked to or likely to have an impact on any other service areas?

The options for Nailsea library form part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset. While the impact at this library is minimal, not implementing the changes (reduction in opening hours) would result in a greater negative impact at other libraries.

6. Action Plan

Are there any further actions that should be taken because of this Equality Impact Assessment?

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Reduced staffed hours	To help reduce the impact of opening at 10:00 on a Tuesday instead of 09:30 and closing at 17:00 instead of 18:00, we propose extending and promoting self-service opening hours. This would allow continued access to key library resources such as book borrowing, computer use, and study spaces outside of staffed hours. While this does not fully replace the benefits of staffed services and community activities, it may help maintain a level of accessibility—	Emma Wellard	March 2026

	particularly for those who rely on the library outside of standard working hours.		

7. Review and Sign Off

Service Manager Review

This updated impact assessment reflects the findings from the public consultation and the revised decision on opening hours. The initial assessment was based on the potential changes outlined in the consultation document; this version incorporates feedback received and the outcome of the consultation process.

Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed?

No

Service Manager:

Emma Wellard

Date:

12 January 2026

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Pill Library

Directorate	Corporate Services
Service area:	Libraries
Lead Officer:	Emma Wellard
Review date:	November 2025
Updated post consultation:	December 2025

Updated Post Recommendation Report: January 2026

Equality Impacts

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget. Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Pill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided; and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual budget for new books and digital

resources.

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Director/Director sign off:

1. The Project

Background to project

The North Somerset Libraries Strategy (2021) outlines the requirement for libraries to adapt in response to evolving demand and financial pressures while continuing to meet statutory obligations. The Council's approved Medium Term Financial Plan, effective from April 2026, includes a 19% reduction in the Library Service budget (approximately £433,000), necessitating changes to service delivery.

To meet these savings targets, the option agreed to go to public consultation in summer 2025 included a proposal to close Worle library. The community are invited to help shape the offer locally. This document is designed to assess the equalities impacts this will have on the local community, library service provision and staff.

To inform these changes, a public consultation was conducted between 31 July and 24 October 2025 to gather feedback on three potential options for transforming the service in line with strategic objectives and achieving the required savings. Following consideration of a range of factors, Option B (see below) has been identified as the recommended approach. This option prioritises areas of greatest need, safeguards equitable access in communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation and delivers the necessary savings through a combination of site adjustments, reductions in staffed hours, and central budget efficiencies. It also ensures continued compliance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

The consultation engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community organisations, and residents. Feedback was collected through multiple channels, including 4,403 responses via eConsult, community engagement events, and additional input received by email. These findings have informed the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups, and detailed assessments have been prepared for each affected site.

Recommended Proposal – Option B

- Reduce staffed opening hours across all Council-run libraries, extending self-service opening hours in mitigation where appropriate.
- Seek a community-managed model for Winscombe Library (retaining LibrariesWest access); close if a viable model cannot be agreed.
- Close Worle Library because of building condition issues; provide alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away).
- Deliver c. £30,000 savings annually from the new books and digital resources budget.
- Reduce opening hours at the Healthy Living Centre Library one day a week to align with the lowest usage.
- Where libraries close, provide alternative access via outreach, developed according to community needs identified through the consultation.

Consultation feedback highlighted potential negative impacts on children and young people, older adults, disabled and neurodivergent residents, low-income households, and rural communities. Mitigations under Option B include targeted staffed hours, extended self-service with safety and accessibility controls, enhanced outreach and mobile provision, retention of Pill Library, support for a community-managed model at Winscombe, and clear pathways to volunteers supported community activities, such as the Home Library Service and digital inclusion support. Stock reductions will be managed through focused collection development, regional resource sharing (LibrariesWest), and increased promotion of eResources.

Recommended proposal for Pill library

The proposal is to retain Pill library in the council network, however, opening hours will be reduced by 30 minutes per week.

Library	Current library opening hours	Proposed library opening hours	Revised library opening hours	Difference	Comments
Pill Library	16.5hrs staffed Tuesday and Friday 09:30 – 12:30 & 13:30 – 17:00 Saturday 09.30 – 13:00	Option A: transfer to community managed model or close the library if no viable solution identified. Option B: retain Pill library with a reduction of 0.5hrs Option C: transfer to community managed model or close the library if no viable solution identified.	16hrs staffed Tuesday and Friday 09:30 – 12:30 & 13:30 – 17:00 Saturday 10.00 – 13:00	Reduction of 0.5 open hours	

Post consultation update

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the public consultation held between 31 July 2025 and 24 October 2025. The consultation engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community groups, and residents. Feedback was gathered through multiple channels, including 538 online responses (for Pill) via eConsult, two community engagement events held in Pill library, and additional input received via email. The findings have been used to refine the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups.

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

- **Accessibility:** Many respondents highlighted the importance of Pill Library for disabled individuals, neurodiverse users, and those with mobility issues. The library's quiet environment and proximity were noted as critical for these groups.
- **Deprivation:** Pill is one of the most deprived areas in North Somerset, with high levels of income deprivation affecting children and elderly. Respondents emphasised the library's role in addressing inequalities by providing free access to books, internet, and a warm, safe space.
- **Impact on Children and Families:** The library's activities, such as Lego Club, Code Club, and Rhyme Time, were highlighted as essential for children's development, particularly for those from low-income families.
- **Digital Exclusion:** Many respondents rely on the library for free internet access and digital services. Closure would disproportionately affect those who cannot afford internet access at home.
- **Community Cohesion:** The library is a vital hub for social interaction, particularly for elderly residents and families. Its closure could exacerbate social isolation and reduce community cohesion.
- **Transport:** concern was raised about accessing alternative libraries e.g. Portishead or Bristol. The cost of public transport was cited as a barrier, especially to families, and time taken to travel to libraries outside of Pill is an issue for full time carers who have limited time to access library services.
- **Volunteers:** respondents expressed an interest in volunteering to support Pill library if it remains under management of North Somerset Council but were concerned that there is not enough volunteer capacity within Pill for it to be a community managed model.

Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers.

- **Local Charities & Non-Profits:** Many charities rely on libraries as meeting spaces, hubs for outreach programs, or venues. Pill library is a designated collection point for the Foodbank Hub, supporting families struggling to afford to buy food. Closing the library could disrupt their ability to engage with the local community effectively.
- **Community Groups:** Groups such as book clubs, job seekers' support groups, digital inclusion programs, often use library space. Councillor and MP surgeries are held at Pill library. Without an alternative venue, these services may be harder to maintain.
- **Children's Services & Family Support:** The library is historically co-located with a children's centre; however, children's services have stopped being delivered from Pill for some time now and are often run out of the nearby local village hall instead. Children's Centres are currently considering what the service offer could look like in Pill and think that services could be delivered in the following way: Family Hubs will provide an outreach service in the Pill area of North Somerset; Continue to deliver a weekly, term time activity for children under the age of 5 from the Salvation Army site; Digital Offer – providing online access to information, advice and support services in the Pill area. Child-minders regularly use the building and would need to find an alternative operating location.
- **Local Arts & Cultural Organisations:** Pill Library has acted as a venue for arts-related events and cultural activities, enriching community life. Closing this space could reduce opportunities for cultural engagement.
- **Public Access to Technology:** Many individuals rely on libraries for free internet access, public computers, printing, online learning, and communication and the library also delivers face to face council services for those who are digitally excluded. The closure will limit digital inclusion and make accessing essential online services and Council services more difficult for the most disadvantaged.

Section 2 – What do we know?

Who is likely to be affected by this project?

Community across North Somerset

Libraries are central to community cohesion, providing access to resources for education, employment, and social interaction. Their closure could disproportionately affect individuals who rely on free internet access, books, and quiet study spaces. Those who experience financial hardship may struggle to access information and recreational reading elsewhere, widening inequalities.

Community in a specific area (Pill and surrounds)

In a smaller community like Pill, where local resources may already be limited, the closure a library could be even more disruptive. Residents who use the library as a gathering place for social inclusion, learning, and support services may struggle to find alternative venues. Vulnerable populations, such as elderly individuals or those with disabilities, may feel isolated due to the loss of a nearby accessible space.

Council Partners

Libraries often collaborate with council services, offering information hubs and assisting in delivering community outreach programs. Libraries provide support and signposting to North Somerset residents who are unable to access council services online. For complex enquiries, staff direct residents to a dedicated council services phone located within the library, ensuring access to the appropriate specialist support.

Losing a library could mean added strain on other public services, such as council call centre, job centres and community advice groups, which may need to accommodate displaced library users seeking assistance.

North Somerset Council Employees

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. The likely impact on staffing will not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is known. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow at that point which will affect the whole service. This uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

Service Users

Regular users of library services, including students, job seekers, and families, would lose a key resource for education and development. Children could particularly suffer, as libraries play a crucial role in early literacy and access to educational programming.

Commissioned Services

Services that rely on libraries as venues for delivery—such as adult learning programs, digital inclusion initiatives, and literacy workshops—may struggle to find suitable alternatives. This disruption could impact service effectiveness and accessibility.

Voluntary/Community Groups

Local voluntary groups often use library spaces for meetings, training, and outreach. The loss of this venue could limit their ability to function effectively, reducing opportunities for community engagement and collaboration.

The closure of a library has significant social and economic repercussions, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities.

Post Consultation Update

The consultation confirmed that Pill Library plays a significant role in supporting individuals with protected characteristics and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Feedback highlighted that the library provides a safe, quiet, and familiar environment that is particularly valued by neurodiverse individuals, those with autism or ADHD, and people managing mental health conditions. It also offers essential access for those with mobility challenges and limited financial means.

The need for maintaining accessible library services in relation to equality is summed up by a quote from the consultation responses:

"Pill is ideal for my children as it is a quieter environment and local and they know where everything is and know the lovely staff."

Feedback emphasized that the library provides a safe, warm, and inclusive space for learning, wellbeing, and social connection. It offers free access to books, IT facilities, and community activities, which are particularly valued by those on low incomes, single parents, and people without internet access at home. Respondents noted that libraries act as preventative services, reducing isolation and supporting mental health, while also helping to mitigate demand for social care.

The need to retain Pill Library in relation to fairness is summed up by a quote from the consultation responses:

"Pill Library has really helped us and given us a safe place to go in the village. Taking access to education and literature from people who actually need it is unfair."

Equality Considerations

- **Protected Characteristics:** Respondents identified as autistic, ADHD, dyslexic, visually impaired, and mobility challenged. Quiet spaces and predictable environments were highlighted as essential for neurodiverse users.
- **Mental Health:** Libraries were described as providing structure and reducing isolation for those experiencing depression or trauma.
- **Socio-economic Barriers:** Low-income families rely on free resources and cannot afford transport to alternative libraries. A round trip to Portishead costs around £10 and takes an hour, making it impractical for many.

- **Religion and Community Cohesion:** Libraries were noted as one of the few remaining spaces where people from different cultural and faith backgrounds can meet, fostering inclusion at a time of community tensions.

Fairness Issues

- **Consultation Accessibility:** The questionnaire was described as lengthy and complex, creating barriers for people with ADHD, dyslexia, or limited English proficiency. Elderly residents also struggled with online access.
- **Representation of Data:** Respondents raised concerns that usage data was presented without context, making Pill appear less used than it is. Pill Library operates only 16.5 hours per week compared to 84 hours at other libraries yet hosts over 100 events annually—an average of two per week. When adjusted for opening hours and population size, Pill's usage compares favourably with larger libraries.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Comments suggested that young people and local schools were not adequately consulted, potentially breaching statutory duties under the Local Government Act 1999 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Responses were received from Crockerne Primary School, St Katherine's School, and Kaleidoscope MAT.
- **Resource Allocation:** Residents questioned whether per capita spending on library services in Pill is lower than in other areas, raising concerns about fairness in investment.

Additional Context

- Pill Library is a hub for families, childminders, and schools, offering activities such as Lego Club, Code Club, and Rhymetime.
- It provides extended services including free Wi-Fi, Healthy Start vitamins, and access to warm spaces during winter.
- Closure would risk increasing health inequalities and reducing educational and social opportunities for children and vulnerable adults.

The need for maintaining accessible library services in relation to equality is summed up by a quote from the consultation responses:

"Pill is ideal for my children as it is a quieter environment and local and they know where everything is and know the lovely staff."

What data or evidence do you have to inform this Equality Impact Assessment?

To inform this Equality Impact Assessment, we gathered a range of data sources to ensure a thorough understanding of library usage and community needs. An initial survey was conducted across all branches between 24 March and 18 April 2025, collecting direct insights from library users.

We also analysed historical membership data from the library management system to identify usage trends across the district and incorporated information from council planning teams and wider demographic statistics to reflect the broader community context.

Page 394
Since the survey, the evidence base has been strengthened with feedback from the recent Library Services Transformation Consultation. This combined data informed the development of final options and recommendations, which will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Who have you consulted with as a part of this project OR who do you plan to consult with?

As part of this project, a twelve-week public consultation was undertaken from 31 July 2025 to 24 October 2025 to explore user needs and assess potential impacts of the proposed options on protected groups. The consultation provided an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community partners, volunteers, and local communities. This process enabled the collection of valuable feedback and ensured that diverse perspectives were considered in decision-making.

Prior to the consultation, a range of data sources was gathered to develop a comprehensive understanding of library usage and community needs. This included a district-wide library survey conducted between 24 March and 18 April 2025 across all branches, including Pill, to capture insights directly from service users.

To ensure fairness and transparency, the consultation was widely publicised and made accessible to both library users and non-users. Information about the proposals and opportunities to provide feedback was shared through multiple channels. Respondents were invited to comment on the importance of libraries, the potential impact of proposed changes, and suggestions for improvement. This inclusive approach enabled non-users to contribute views on barriers to access, alternative service models, and the wider role of libraries. Of the total responses received, 117 individuals indicated that they do not currently use the library service, demonstrating that the consultation captured perspectives beyond regular users.

Consultation documents and response forms were available in paper format in all libraries and online via the Council's website at <https://n-somerset.inconsult.uk/Libraries/consultationHome>. A total of 4,403 responses were submitted through paper and online questionnaires, supplemented by additional feedback received via email, children's surveys, and informal conversations at drop-in events, bringing overall participation to over 5,000 individuals. Fourteen engagement events were held in libraries and community locations, attended by approximately 186 participants.

Briefings were delivered to all ward members, town and parish councillors, followed by email summaries encouraging wider community engagement. Articles promoting the consultation appeared in the *Town and Parish Digest* throughout the consultation period. Over 200 stakeholders were contacted directly by email and invited to participate as individuals or organisations. Additional coverage included features in *eLife*, distributed to over 100,000 email addresses in August and October. Notifications were sent via the NSC app to 21,000 registered users, and 42,000 North Somerset Library members received email invitations in August and October. Regular updates were posted on social media, and Cllr Solomon participated in an interview on BBC Radio Bristol to raise awareness.

All North Somerset schools were contacted and encouraged to share the consultation with pupils, parents, and carers. The Schools Engagement and Participation Officer also visited schools to speak directly with young people and invite contributions.

This approach reflects the Council's commitment to broad and inclusive engagement and demonstrates the extensive efforts made to raise awareness of the consultation among diverse groups across North Somerset. While it is acknowledged that no engagement process can capture every individual view, significant steps were taken to maximise participation through

widespread publicity, social media activity, and prominent signage. Initial evaluation of responses supports the conclusion that awareness of the consultation was widespread.

238 (44.24%) respondents (for Pill library) indicated they had equality-related concerns. This figure may include individuals selecting multiple protected characteristics or fairness issues (e.g., disability, age, sexual orientation, low income), so it does not represent 238 unique individuals but rather the total number of selections.

The high number of equality concerns suggests that the proposed closure or transfer to community managed model has broad potential impacts across multiple protected groups and fairness categories.

Equality issues are not isolated to one group; they span disability, age, income, sexual orientation, and other vulnerabilities, indicating that the library plays a significant role in supporting inclusive access for diverse community members.

In addition to the above, the parish council publicly responded:

Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council supports option B of the consultation. We strongly oppose the potential closure of Pill library and Children's Centre and recommend that the service continues to be managed by North Somerset Council and remains part of their library network.

Our library is far more than a place to borrow books – it is a vital community hub used by people of all ages, from pre-school children to the elderly. It provides a safe and accessible space for learning, play, wellbeing and social connection, supporting groups such as local childminders, schools and families. It also offers essential extended services, including free wifi, a warm room in the winter months, dispensation of Healthy Start vitamins, and access to free hot drinks and charging facilities. Last year alone, the library hosted over 100 events, averaging around one every weekday it is open.

Pill West, where the library is situated, is identified as one of the most deprived areas in North Somerset. Many residents face challenges linked to low income, poor health, and limited access to digital services. North Somerset Council themselves identify within their consultation document that, within Pill, 'community need is considered high'. Losing the library would risk increasing

health inequalities and cutting off services from those who need them most. Furthermore, with large housing developments planned, demand for local facilities like Pill library will only grow in the future if these developments gain planning permission.

Volunteers already make a huge contribution within our parish, but relying solely on a community managed library service, as suggested in options A and C of the consultation, would put huge pressure on our volunteer network and may lead to permanent loss of this, or other services. The consultation document itself states that if options A or C are chosen 'if no viable community-led solutions are found. These libraries may unfortunately have to close so that the required level of savings can be made'. Equally, signposting residents to Portishead Library or a mobile alternative would strip away the wide range of extended local services that Pill library currently provides.

For these reasons, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council firmly recommend that North Somerset Council selects Option B, ensuring Pill library remains a Council-managed service at the heart of our community, with potential for exploration of more cost-effective ways to sustain it into the future.

In response to the consultation a group of local residents formed the Friends of Pill library, a small charity with a constitution governed by trustees. There are around 30 volunteers interested in supporting Pill library to ensure it is connected with the community, to organize events and activities at the library, to raise funds and to promote the service. They submitted the following feedback via email:

Friends of Pill library public response via Libs Review email on 22 Oct: Pill is a small community with relatively few local services in comparison with its larger neighbours, such as Portishead. Within this context, Pill Library is a vital local resource, with a value that extends far beyond book lending alone. For instance, it hosts over 100 events each year, including Lego Club, Code Club, and Rhymetime — an average of two events per week, despite being open for only 2.5 days per week. This illustrates just how valued the library is, particularly by children and families. The library also offers free IT access to those without computers or internet at home, and provides a safe, warm space for vulnerable individuals. As North Somerset Library Services themselves recognise, libraries “bring people together, support learning, provide access to information, and open doors to opportunity.” Pill Library is a clear example of this in action.

Pill Library is of added importance to the community because of its location. It sits in Pill West, which is the most deprived area of North Somerset outside Weston-super-Mare, where residents may face significant challenges across income, employment, education, health, and disability. In such a context, libraries act as preventative services — supporting children, families, and vulnerable adults, while reducing demand (and costs) for social care. The Libraries Consultation is taking place precisely because North Somerset Council is facing enormous financial pressures due to rising social care costs, and has asked Library Services to find £433,000 in savings. Closing Pill Library would be short-sighted and counterproductive, as it would do very little - if anything - to reduce Council expenses.

The Pill Equality Impact Assessment shows that closure of the library would have a high impact on disabled people and women, with significant impacts on children and the elderly. Given that 26% of Pill Library users are over 75, and that children's activities run most days it is open, the real impact on both the elderly and children should also be considered high in the assessment. Within this context, accessibility is a further issue. If Pill Library were to close, the nearest alternative would be Portishead Library, 4.6 miles away; a round trip by bus costs around £10 for a family and takes roughly an hour — an unaffordable and impractical journey for many residents. Mobile and outreach services would be unable to replicate what the library currently offers these user groups, for example in terms of events, or acting as a warm, safe space.

Are there any gaps in our evidence to support this Equality Impact Assessment? If so, what are the plans to gather this information?

An earlier iteration of this assessment acknowledged that the original small-scale survey, which was not designed to capture the views of children, resulted in gaps in understanding how young people engage with library services and how potential changes might affect them. To address this, the Council implemented a comprehensive approach during the public consultation to engage children, young people, and those working with them. Senior leaders and governors from local schools were contacted directly via email at the outset, and additional outreach included informal discussions with parents and school staff during library visits and engagement events.

The Children's Services Engagement and Participation Team promoted the consultation through social media, with posts widely reshared by community groups, and conducted in-person school visits to support young people in completing questionnaires

during VOICE sessions. Some schools also distributed consultation details through their own communication channels. At Pill Library and Children's Centre, engagement extended to childminders, supported by proactive communication and reinforced through library-based activities such as Rhymetime sessions. Further promotion occurred via social media platforms and through the Friends of Pill Library group, which undertook local outreach, including market stalls, social media posts, press coverage, and poster displays. The consultation was additionally publicised through the North Somerset 'Together' network, involving a broad range of community partners. These combined efforts demonstrate the Council's commitment to inclusive engagement and widespread awareness of the consultation opportunity.

In addition, the original survey did not include feedback from non-users of libraries. To address this, the consultation was promoted widely to maximise awareness and provide as many people as possible—including those who do not currently use libraries—with the opportunity to respond.

Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

Will the project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) on any of these groups?

Updated to reflect recommendation for Option B to be taken forward and the impact at Pill to be a reduction of 30 minutes opening hours per week)

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)			x			x	In the 2021 Census , 16.53% (9.87%+6.66%) of people in Pill identify themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act, having

day to day activities limited a little or a lot. At Pill library 18.36% (18) of library survey respondents identified as having a physical or mental health condition which impacts their day-to-day life. Therefore, closure of the library will have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities.

Post consultation update

57 (10.59%) respondents in Pill requested that disability (including neurodiversity) is taken into consideration. Multiple respondents highlighted the importance of quiet, (and noisy) predictable environments for neurodiverse individuals and children.

Pill Library was described as *ideal* due to its atmosphere, familiar layout, and supportive staff.

Closure would significantly reduce access for those unable to travel easily, especially those who declared they have mobility challenges.

Activities such as Lego mornings were cited as beneficial for children with ADHD

				and autism. Local provision reduces stress and logistical challenges for carers. The consultation reinforces the initial assessment: closure of the library would have a disproportionate negative impact on people with disabilities, particularly those who are neurodiverse, mobility-impaired, visually impaired, or carers of neurodiverse children. Key reasons include: • Loss of a familiar, quieter, and accessible environment. • Increased barriers to accessing alternative libraries (transport, physical access). • Reduced opportunities for inclusive activities and community engagement.
People from different ethnic groups	x			97% of library survey respondents identified as White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. According to the North

					Somerset JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) 95.7% of the overall population is White. <u>Post consultation update</u> 15 (2.78%) respondents asked that race is considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	x			x	68% of library survey respondents were female and 5% of survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act due to pregnancy or maternity. In North Somerset, Census data indicates that 51.4% of the population is women (and 50.31% in Pill), therefore women will be disproportionately affected by a closure at this branch. The closure of the library would result in the discontinuation of services such as Rhyme Time. Evidence suggests that participation in such sessions can have a positive impact on maternal mental health, offering opportunities for social

			connection, routine, and support during the early stages of parenthood. The removal of this provision may therefore disproportionately affect new mothers and primary carers, particularly those experiencing isolation or mental health challenges. <u>Post consultation update</u> 19 (3.53%) people asked that pregnancy or maternity is considered, and 13 people mentioned sex when regarding fairness issues. Consistent attendance at events aimed at families despite only being open for 2.5 days per week has been cited as an important factor. Closure would have a significant impact on this group.
People who are LGBTQ+	x	x	4% of library survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act, due to sexual orientation. The North Somerset Census average was 2.61%, which would indicate a higher impact on LGBTQ+ communities. This is higher usage rate is likely a result of community partner use of library space, rather than a reflection of the average library user.

				<u>Post consultation update</u> 12 (2.23%) respondents asked for their sexual orientation to be considered as a fairness issue. While no direct concerns were expressed, the higher-than-average usage suggests that closure could disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ individuals by reducing access to a safe, inclusive community space. Libraries often serve as neutral, welcoming environments, which may be particularly valued by LGBTQ+ users
People on a low income	x		x	While we don't hold data on the deprivation level of Pill library service users, we know that 17% of library survey respondents come to the library because they cannot afford internet access at home. Others may not be able to buy books or heat their homes and therefore the closure is assessed to have a negative impact on more deprived groups. In the 2021 Census 48.89% of households in Pill had one or more dimension deprivation. Pill library is currently a collection point for the food hub. Closure may

disproportionately affect vulnerable groups and exacerbate existing inequalities in access to essential support services.

Post consultation update

Pill Library provides a safe, free local space for families with limited financial resources. Respondents highlighted lack of confidence and financial means to travel to other libraries. Barriers include no access to a car, public transport costs, and inability to afford internet access or paid community activities.

Closure would remove a vital resource for those who rely on free services for education, social connection, and digital access.

Closure of the library would disproportionately affect low-income households by:

- Increasing isolation and reducing access to educational and cultural resources.
- Limiting opportunities for digital inclusion (e.g., internet access).

				• Creating financial and logistical barriers to accessing alternative libraries or activities.
People in particular age groups	x		x	Children and elderly are more likely to use the library and are therefore disproportionately impacted by the closure of this site. 26% of Pill library survey respondents indicated they were over 75 years of age. The closure of the library would have a notable impact on children and young people, particularly through the loss of Lego Club and Code Club. These free, inclusive activities provide valuable opportunities for informal learning, creativity, and digital skill development outside of school. Code Club supports digital literacy and introduces children to programming in a supportive environment, helping to bridge the digital divide. Lego Club encourages problem-solving, teamwork, and imaginative play, contributing to cognitive

and social development. 170 children attended Lego club in 2024/25.

The removal of these services may disproportionately affect children from lower-income families who may not have access to similar resources at home, potentially widening educational and digital inequalities.

Post consultation update

74 (13.75%) respondents asked that age is taken into consideration as a fairness issue.

No direct comments were received from individuals specifically identifying age-related concerns. However, several altruistic comments requested that the impact on elderly people and young children be considered.

Closure of the library could disproportionately affect:

- Older residents, who may rely on the library for social interaction, lifelong learning, and access to resources in a familiar, accessible environment.

			Families with young children, who benefit from early years activities (e.g., story times, Lego mornings) and access to books for literacy development. Attendance at events was cited as an important factor to consider. Both groups may face barriers to accessing alternative libraries due to transport limitations, costs, and confidence in unfamiliar settings. Therefore, the impact remains high.
People in particular faith groups	x		Only 4 respondents at Pill library indicated that their religion, belief (or none) needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 6% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 15 (2.788%) respondents requested that faith is considered. No specific comments were made. This assessment remains as low in case those who are affected by the

				changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly
People who are married or in a civil partnership	x			Only 3 respondents at Pill library indicated that being married or in a civil partnership needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 3% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 15 (2.788%) respondents selected marriage or civil partnership as a fairness issue to be considered. There have been no comments raised in the consultation in relation to people who are married or in a civil partnership. This assessment remains as low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x			Library survey responses indicate that only 1% of library users identified as being a different gender to the one assigned at

			birth, with 3% preferring not to say. At Pill library, 4 respondents preferred not to say, and no respondents identified their gender as being different to the one assigned at birth and therefore any impacts are deemed negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 6 (1.12%) respondents selected gender reassignment as a fairness issue to be considered. There have been no comments raised in the consultation in relation to this. This assessment remains as low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:	x		We do not hold data for these groups; however, knowledge of the local community would indicate that these groups are not highly represented in this area. As part of the consultation process, we intend to gather more detailed data and better understand the potential impact on these groups—particularly

unpaid carers—to ensure their needs and perspectives are fully considered.

Post consultation update

12 (2.23%) respondents from Pill library selected care experienced as an equality consideration. No specific comments were included. Other issues raised:

Safe, Warm Space: Libraries provide a secure, welcoming environment, particularly valued during colder months and for those who may not have alternative safe spaces.

Closure could increase isolation and reduce access to community support.
Transport Barriers: Lack of transport options was frequently mentioned, making travel to alternative libraries difficult or impossible for some residents. This disproportionately affects those without cars, with mobility challenges, or on low incomes. Access for Working Parents & Limited Opening Hours: Current limited opening hours already restrict access for working parents. Closure would remove flexible local options,

reducing opportunities for family engagement and literacy activities.

Mental Health: Regular library visits provide structure and routine, which some respondents said supports mental health recovery and wellbeing. Closure could negatively impact those who rely on this routine for stability and social connection.

The closure of the library would likely:

- Reduce access to safe, warm, and inclusive spaces for vulnerable groups.
 - Increase barriers to participation in community life due to transport limitations.
 - Negatively affect mental health for individuals who depend on the library for routine and social interaction.
 - Limit opportunities for families and working parents to engage in educational and cultural activities locally.
-

Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other budget savings? **Yes**

The options for Pill library form part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset and any mitigations implemented may increase costs in other areas of the library and council services (for example outreach costs).

Section 4 – Options

What other options have been considered?

Do nothing. The Council has declared a financial emergency: this option is not feasible as transformation is required to achieve the £433k revenue savings target included in the Council's MTFP and helps ensure that we continue to deliver sustainable services with our communities.

Consider adopting either Option A or Option C, as presented in the consultation. These options were rejected in favour of option B for the reasons outlined in section 1 of the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Section 5 – Action Plan

While a formal action plan is not strictly required because the library is being retained as a council-run service and opening hours reduced by 30 minutes per week, there are specific actions identified to strengthen community engagement and partnerships. These actions aim to enhance inclusivity, increase local involvement, and make better use of the Friends of Pill Library group. The service is keen to work with the community to develop these opportunities.

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Ongoing opportunity to work more closely with Pill community to strengthen the library offer locally	Continued liaison with community groups and development of action plan.	Emma Wellard / delegated officer	April 2026

If after planned actions you anticipate negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

As Pill Library is being retained as a council-run service, there is no reduction or removal of access to Council services. The physical benefits of a library building—such as social connection, inclusion, and access to resources—will continue to be provided. Maintaining the library helps prevent potential increases in social isolation, loneliness, and deprivation, supporting community cohesion and reducing social inequality in North Somerset.

Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with those effected?

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

Section 6 – Monitoring

What are the governance arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actions listed above and the actual impact on protected or significant groups?

A full plan will be put in place once the outcome of the consultation is known and a decision made on a way forward.

Section 7 – Publish the Assessment

How will you publish this Equality Impact Assessment?

A comprehensive version of the Equality Impact Assessment will be made available on a dedicated webpage. This will include downloadable documents and contact information for further inquiries or feedback.

Hard copies will be distributed to local libraries to ensure that individuals without internet access can review the materials.

These measures are intended to provide broad public access and encourage informed participation in the consultation process.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)- Portishead Library

1. The Project

Directorate:	Corporate Services
Service area:	Libraries
Lead Officer:	Emma Wellard
Date:	July 2025
Review date:	November 2025
Updated:	December 2025

Updated Post Recommendation Report: January 2026

Description of the project:

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget.

Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Pill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model

emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided; and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual budget for new books and digital resources.

Summary of changes:

To meet these savings targets, the option agreed to go to public consultation in summer 2025 included a proposal to change the opening hours at Portishead library. The proposed change involved closing at 12:30 instead of 13:00 on Saturdays. This document is designed to assess the equalities impacts this will have on the local community, library service provision and staff.

Following consultation on the proposal to reduce opening hours, and after reviewing stakeholder feedback alongside further analysis of footfall data, the recommendation regarding opening hours has been revised. Rather than reducing Saturday hours, it is recommended that Portishead Library opens at 10:00 on Thursdays instead of 09:30. As well as responding to customer feedback, this adjustment also enhances clarity for customers by standardising the later opening time. Currently, libraries open later once a month for staff meetings, which requires separate communication. By adopting a consistent later opening on Thursdays, the need for additional messaging is removed.

Post consultation update

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the findings from the public consultation held between 31 July 2025 and 24 October 2025. The consultation engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community groups, and residents. Feedback was gathered through multiple channels, including 820 online responses (for Portishead) via eConsult, a community engagement event held in Portishead library, and additional input received via email. The findings have been used to refine the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups.

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

Libraries as Essential Community Services: Portishead library is described as vital for education, literacy development, and community cohesion. It provides a safe, quiet space for all ages, including children, elderly people, and vulnerable groups.

Minimal Impact of reduction in opening hours: Many respondents noted that minor reductions in opening hours (e.g., 30 minutes) would have little personal impact, especially if extended access remains available. However, concerns were raised about the impact on families with young children who cannot use unstaffed libraries.

Strong Opposition to Closures: Closing libraries is seen as highly detrimental, reducing access to learning, social contact, and essential services. Libraries are viewed as a lifeline for those who lack alternative spaces or resources.

Importance of Staffed Hours: Respondents identified that staff support is critical for IT assistance, printing, and helping those with additional needs. Increased unstaffed hours could exclude users who feel unsafe or struggle with technology.

Protecting Core Services: Maintaining budgets for new books and resources is considered essential to preserve the value of the library service. Libraries are about more than books—they provide access to internet, printing, and council services.

Impact on Children and Future Generations: Portishead library plays a key role in introducing children to reading, fostering imagination, and supporting educational attainment. Reduced access risks long-term negative effects on literacy and learning.

Infrastructure and Accessibility: Respondents expressed concern that extended access systems and printing facilities need to be reliable if staffed hours are reduced. Parking charges and venue changes could further impact accessibility.

Although minor changes to opening hours may have limited immediate impact for many users, respondents expressed strong concerns about broader service reductions, including cuts to book budgets, increased unstaffed hours, and potential library closures. Libraries are widely regarded as essential public services that provide far more than books—they offer safe, inclusive spaces for learning, social interaction, and digital access, supporting wellbeing and community cohesion. Protecting staffed hours

and core resources, particularly for children and vulnerable groups, was seen as critical to maintaining equality of access. Overall, the comments highlight that libraries are a cornerstone of education and social infrastructure, and any significant reduction in services risks long-term harm to individuals and communities.

2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the changes proposed in this project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) for any of these groups?

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type	
	H	M	L	N	+	-
Disabled people (Including the consideration of neurodiversity)			x			
People from different ethnic groups			x			
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)			x			

Page 420

People who are LGBTQ+	x		
People on a low income	x		
People in particular age groups	x		
People in particular faith groups	x		
People who are married or in a civil partnership	x		
People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x		
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:	x		

3. Explanation of customer impact

The decision to reduce opening hours has been assessed as having a low impact on protected groups. This is because the change represents a minimal reduction in service hours, occurring at the end of the day when footfall data shows that usage is typically lower. Protected groups are unlikely to be disproportionately affected. Digital services and weekend opening hours, remain

available to support continued inclusion and accessibility. Extended Access will be available for an additional half hour per week, when the library would otherwise now be closed.

Please describe how you will communicate these changes to those impacted.

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

4. Staff equality impact summary

Are there any staffing implications for this proposal? Yes

Explanation of staff impact

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. The likely impact on staffing will not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is known. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow at that point which will affect the whole service. This uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

5. Cumulative equality impacts

Is this project linked to or likely to have an impact on any other service areas?

The options for Portishead library form part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset. While the impact at this library is minimal, not implementing the changes (reduction in opening hours) would result in a greater negative impact at other libraries.

6. Action Plan

Are there any further actions that should be taken because of this Equality Impact Assessment?

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Reduced staffed hours	To help reduce the impact of opening at 10:00 on a Thursday instead of 09:30, we propose extending and promoting self-service opening hours. This would allow continued access to key library resources such as book borrowing, computer use, and study spaces outside of staffed hours. While this does not fully replace the benefits of staffed services and community activities, it helps maintain a level of accessibility—particularly for those who rely on the library outside of standard working hours.	Emma Wellard (or delegated officer)	March 2026

7. Review and Sign Off

Service Manager Review

This updated impact assessment reflects the findings from the public consultation and the revised decision on opening hours. The initial assessment was based on the potential changes outlined in the consultation document; this version incorporates feedback received and the outcome of the consultation process.

Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed? **No**

Service Manager: Emma Wellard
Date: 12 January 2026



Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Weston-super-Mare Library

Directorate Corporate Services
Service area: Libraries
Lead Officer: Emma Wellard
Review date: November 2025
Updated post consultation: December 2025

Equality Impacts

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget. Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Mill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided; and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual budget for new books and digital resources.

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

After mitigating actions

High

Medium

Low

No

Director sign off:

1. The Project

Background to project

The North Somerset Libraries Strategy (2021) outlines the requirement for libraries to adapt in response to evolving demand and financial pressures while continuing to meet statutory obligations. The Council's approved Medium Term Financial Plan, effective from April 2026, includes a 19% reduction in the Library Service budget (approximately £433,000), necessitating changes to service delivery.

To inform these changes, a public consultation was conducted between 31 July and 24 October 2025 to gather feedback on three potential options for transforming the service in line with strategic objectives and achieving the required savings. Following consideration of a range of factors, Option B (see below) has been identified as the recommended approach.

This option prioritises areas of greatest need, safeguards equitable access in communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation and delivers the necessary savings through a combination of site adjustments, reductions in staffed hours, and central budget efficiencies. It also ensures continued compliance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

The consultation engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community organisations, and residents. Feedback was collected through multiple channels, including 4,403 responses via eConsult, community engagement events, and additional input received by email. These findings have informed the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups, and detailed assessments have been prepared for each affected site.

Recommended Proposal – Option B

- Reduce staffed opening hours across all Council-run libraries, extending self-service opening hours in mitigation where appropriate.
- Seek a community-managed model for Winscombe Library (retaining LibrariesWest access); close if a viable model cannot be agreed.
- Close Worle Library because of building condition issues; provide alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away).
- Deliver c. £30,000 savings annually from the new books and digital resources budget.
- Reduce opening hours at the Healthy Living Centre Library one day a week to align with the lowest usage.
- Where libraries close, provide alternative access via outreach, developed according to community needs identified through the consultation.

Page 42
 Consultation feedback highlighted potential negative impacts on children and young people, older adults, disabled and neurodivergent residents, low-income households, and rural communities. Mitigations under Option B include targeted staffed hours, extended self-service with safety and accessibility controls, enhanced outreach and mobile provision, retention of Pill Library, support for a community-managed model at Winscombe, and clear pathways to volunteer supported community activities, such as the Home Library Service and digital inclusion support. Stock reductions will be managed through focused collection development, regional resource sharing (LibrariesWest), and increased promotion of eResources

To meet these savings targets, the option presented at the public consultation in summer 2025 included a proposal to close the North Somerset local studies library (Frederick Wood room) at 12:30 instead of 16:00 on Saturdays and to close 2 days per week. This aligns the local studies service with comparable facilities who do not operate 6 days a week. In addition, the proposal is to close Weston-super-Mare library at 12:30 instead of 16:00 on Saturdays and close at 17:00 instead of 18:00 on weekdays. The feasibility of extending self-service hours between 17:00 to 18:00 will be explored. This document is designed to assess the equalities impacts this will have on the local community, library service provision and staff.

Post consultation update

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the findings from the public consultation held between 31 July 2025 and 24 October 2025. The consultation engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community groups, and residents. Feedback was gathered through multiple channels, including 724 online responses (for Weston) and a further 60 specifically for the local studies library via eConsult, a community engagement event held in Weston library, and additional input received via email. The findings have been used to refine the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups.

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

Impact of Reduced Hours: - Reduced library opening hours, particularly on Saturdays and evenings, are highlighted as a significant barrier for working individuals, families, students, and retirees who rely on libraries as accessible community resources. - Participants emphasize that reduced hours may further decrease usage due to limited access, particularly for those working 9-5 jobs or managing family commitments. - Closing Weston library earlier on Saturdays (12:30 pm) removes a key option for families attending other morning activities.

Social and Educational Role of Libraries: - Weston library is valued as a social hub that promotes inclusion, facilitates learning, and acts as a safe, cost-free space for community engagement. Libraries contribute significantly to early childhood education, personal development, and lifelong learning, as seen in examples of users advancing their careers through library resources. - There is an emphasis on the detrimental impact of library closures more widely on educational attainment, social isolation, community role, and health and mental well-being.

Digital Access and IT Support: - Weston library provides access to digital resources, computers, and IT help, which are vital for digitally excluded individuals, including older residents or those with low income. - Concerns are raised about reduced access to these essential services, especially with the rise of online-only transactions for government and utility services.

Cultural and Historical Role: - The historical and archival role of libraries (e.g., Weston's local history resources) is critical for specific users, including researchers and specialized groups. Reducing staffed access to these resources limits their usability.

Appreciation for Library Staff: - Staff are repeatedly praised for their friendliness, expertise, and assistance in sourcing books, IT support, and community outreach programs. Reduced staffing is seen as a major drawback to the quality of services, particularly for those needing personalized support.

In addition to the key themes that emerged for Weston library, there was also significant responses reflecting a broad range of concerns tied to the proposal to reduce the days that the local studies library (Frederick wood room) is open. Many participants emphasize the importance of the library as a cultural and historical resource, and its accessibility to the community. Below are the main themes and insights derived from the responses provided

Reduction in Accessibility: - A significant number of respondents, particularly those with school-aged children and working individuals, expressed concerns about reduced access during Saturday afternoons and across multiple weekdays. Saturday afternoons are highlighted as the only realistic option for many due to weekday commitments. Retirees noted their lesser impact from weekday closures, but they stressed the importance of maintaining resources for all demographics, including working individuals.

Impact on Cultural and Historical Research: - Respondents described the Frederick Wood room as a vital resource for local history, family history research, educational purposes, and community groups like the Worle History Society. Many fear that reduced hours will hinder ongoing research, group meetings, and access to digital and physical archival materials.

Community and Volunteer Engagement: - Several users suggested utilizing experienced volunteers to ensure the Fred Wood room remains open without additional staff costs. Concerns were raised that staff reduction would cause the service to deteriorate.

Potential Overcrowding: - With fewer opening days, respondents predicted increased demand during the limited hours, which could lead to overcrowding in the Frederick Wood room and reduced access to resources such as microfiche machines for planning application reviews.

Adverse Financial Implications: - Some respondents questioned the potential cost-saving impact of the proposal, highlighting that the shared staffing arrangement with Weston Library might mean the financial gains are minimal

There is strong community appreciation for the Local Studies Library, with its extensive physical archives of books, maps, and photographs being viewed as a treasure trove for local and family history. Respondents urge decision-makers to weigh the library's cultural and educational significance against the cost savings from reduced hours. Many emphasize maintaining accessibility, either physically or digitally, to ensure equitable access across the community. This summary underscores the community's

collective value placed on the Local Studies Library as a pillar for local cultural heritage, learning, and community engagement, with varied and innovative suggestions offered to mitigate the impacts of reduced operating hours.

Recommended Proposal for Weston Library (including the North Somerset local studies library / Frederick Wood room)

Based on feedback received through the consultation we are proposing to revise the opening hours as per the table below. The recommendation is a reduction of 8.5 staffed hours for Weston Library and 2.5 days, equivalent of 15 hours for the North Somerset local studies Library. To help maintain access and convenience for users, the introduction of self-service facilities will be explored to increase availability outside staffed hours.

Library	Current library opening hours	Proposed library opening hours	Revised library opening hours	Difference	Comments
Weston Library	49hrs staffed 2.5hrs self-service Monday to Friday 09:30 – 18:00 Saturday 09:30 – 16:00 Self-service Monday to Saturday 09:00-09:30	40.5hrs staffed 7.5hrs self-service Monday to Friday 09:30 – 17:00 Saturday 09:30 – 12:30 Self-service Monday to Saturday 09:00-	40.5hrs staffed 9hrs self-service Monday 09:30-18:00 Tuesday 09:30 – 16:30 Wednesday 10:00 – 16:30 Thursday 09:30 – 16:30 Friday 09:30 – 16:30 Saturday 09:30 – 14:00	Reduction of 8.5 staffed hours, increase of 9hrs self-service	Feedback requested maintaining opening hours on a Saturday. Additional self-service pending risk assessment and agreement with partners.

		09:30, and Monday to Friday 17:00 – 18:00	Self-service Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday 09:00-09:30 Wednesday 09:00-10:00 Tuesday to Friday 16:30 – 18:00, Saturday 14:00-16:00		
North Somerset Local Studies Library	36hrs staffed Monday to Saturday 10:00 – 16:00	21hrs staffed (equivalent reduction of 2.5 days)	21hrs staffed Monday 10:00 – 16:00 Tuesday 10:00 – 16:00 Thursday 10:00 – 16:00 Saturday 10:00 – 13:00	Reduction of 15 staffed hours.	Investigate options for self-service hours with limited facilities, while encouraging customers to book appointments during staffed hours for services requiring staff support.

Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers.

- **Public Access to Technology:** Many individuals rely on libraries for free internet access, public computers, printing, online learning, and communication and the library also delivers face to face council services for those who are digitally

excluded. The reduction in opening hours will marginally limit digital inclusion and make accessing essential online services and Council services more difficult for the most disadvantaged.

- **Local Cultural Organisations:** Organisations have access to local history archives and resources to carry out research for projects and exhibitions. Access to these collections will be limited. There will be delays to working collaboratively with organisations. Organisations also use the space in the wider library to promote their work and to undertake engagement activities with residents, in support of corporate and library strategic objectives. Reduced opening hours will reduce the time available for this activity and potentially the reach and impact.
- **Education Providers:** Local schools often rely on libraries for curriculum support, extracurricular activities, and student study spaces. Should the library close, this could limit students' access to books, research materials and technology. The local studies library provides a valuable source of information which schools access on visits to the library and this access would be reduced in the options proposed.
- **Social & Health Services:** Libraries often serve as informal access points for health information, social service referrals, and mental health support programs. They provide access to information and support, promote health and wellbeing, signpost to professional support and enable residents to maintain independence for longer. They often lend equipment to support health and wellbeing initiatives. Reducing the opening hours of Weston Library will therefore impact on this type of programme.
- **Employment & Skills Training:** Reduction in the hours that access to free public wi-fi, printing and online resources is available will impact on delivery of council employment services. It will make it harder for unemployed or under-skilled individuals to access job support. The library may also be able to deliver fewer local volunteering opportunities.
- **Local Arts & Cultural Organisations:** Libraries often host arts-related events, writing groups, and cultural activities, enriching community life. Reducing opening hours may reduce opportunities for cultural engagement.
- **Public Access to Technology:** Many individuals rely on libraries for free internet access, public computers, printing, online learning, and communication. The library is also a key location in North Somerset for the delivery of face-to-face council services for those who are digitally excluded. If library opening hours are reduced, this will make accessing essential online services and Council services more difficult for those lacking their own internet access or the skills to engage online.

Section 2 – What do we know?

Who is likely to be affected by this project?

Community across North Somerset

Libraries are central to community cohesion, providing access to resources for education, employment, and social interaction. The reduction in opening hours could disproportionately affect individuals who rely on free internet access, books, and quiet study spaces. Those who experience financial hardship may struggle to access information and recreational reading elsewhere, widening inequalities.

Libraries in North Somerset operate on a district wide basis and are part of the wider LibrariesWest partnership which operates across 7 authorities in South West England (145 libraries, lending 2.5 million items). Libraries therefore offer residents free access to resources across a wider community than in their local area.

Community in a specific area (Weston-super-Mare)

Council Partners

Libraries collaborate widely with other council services and deliver activities supporting a wide range of corporate objectives. They act as information hubs and act as venues for the delivery of community outreach programs and council engagement activities. Libraries provide support and signposting to North Somerset residents who are unable to access council services online. For complex enquiries, staff direct residents to a dedicated council services phone located within the library, ensuring access to the appropriate specialist support. Planning and Heritage officers make regular use of the unique resources held in the North Somerset

Studies Library and the reduction in opening hours will affect their ability to access this information and staff expertise. Customers wishing to view planning documents held on microfiche will also be impacted by the reduction in opening hours in the same space.

North Somerset Council Employees

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. North Somerset Council are not seeking to make the required savings through redundancies, although it is likely that there will be an impact on staffing. The likely impact on staffing will not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is known. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow at that point which will affect the whole service. This period of uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

Service Users

Regular users of the local studies library, including students, and researchers, would have reduced opportunities to engage with local heritage, which can weaken cultural identity and pride. Regular users of library services, including students, job seekers, and families, would have reduced opportunities to engage with education and development. Customers using the North Somerset Studies Library as a quiet space to study (which may be due to disability or neurodiversity) will have access to this space reduced significantly.

Commissioned Services

The South West Heritage Trust provides a quarterly archivist visit to the North Somerset Studies Library. Reduced hours may mean fewer casual visitors or walk-ins who might otherwise discover and benefit from the historic archives service. This may result in decreased community awareness and underutilisation of a valuable specialist resource.

Voluntary/Community Groups

Local voluntary groups often use library spaces for meetings, training, and outreach. A reduction in opening hours could limit their ability to function effectively, reducing opportunities for community engagement and collaboration. Reducing the opening hours of the North Somerset Studies Library will impact on the community facing work of the local Family History Society and their volunteers.

Reducing the opening hours of Weston Library may impact on the volunteers who support library services in this location.

Post consultation update

The consultation confirmed that Weston Library plays a crucial role as an inclusive and accessible community hub, offering vital support for education, digital inclusion, mental well-being, and social engagement, particularly for individuals from protected and disadvantaged groups such as older adults, disabled persons, low-income families, and carers. The impact of reducing the opening hours in relation to equality is summed up by a quote from the consultation responses:

I do not have the resources to purchase books and I often go to the library for somewhere warm and friendly to just sit and read. I won't be able to do this as much if opening times are reduced.

The feedback underscores the essential role libraries play in fostering equality, education, and community well-being, while raising concerns that reductions in service could disproportionately impact protected characteristics, particularly age, disability, and socioeconomic status.

The need for maintaining accessible library services in relation to equality is summed up by a quote from the consultation responses:

Reduced access to library books for my children. Reduced access to quiet, cost free space to be out of the house, for my autistic daughter who finds loud spaces e.g. cafes challenging.

What data or evidence do you have to inform this Equality Impact Assessment?

To inform this Equality Impact Assessment, we gathered a range of data sources to ensure a thorough understanding of library usage and community needs. An initial survey was conducted across all branches between 24 March and 18 April 2025, collecting direct insights from library users.

We also analysed historical membership data from the library management system to identify usage trends across the district and incorporated information from council planning teams and wider demographic statistics to reflect the broader community context.

Since the survey, the evidence base has been strengthened with feedback from the recent Library Services Transformation Consultation. This combined data informed the development of final options and recommendations, which will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Who have you consulted with as a part of this project OR who do you plan to consult with?

As part of this project, a twelve-week public consultation was undertaken from 31 July 2025 to 24 October 2025 to explore user needs and assess potential impacts of the proposed options on protected groups. The consultation provided an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community partners, volunteers, and local communities. This process enabled the collection of valuable feedback and ensured that diverse perspectives were considered in decision-making.

Prior to the consultation, a range of data sources was gathered to develop a comprehensive understanding of library usage and community needs. This included a district-wide library survey conducted between 24 March and 18 April 2025 across all branches, including Weston-super-Mare Library, to capture insights directly from service users.

To ensure fairness and transparency, the consultation was widely publicised and made accessible to both library users and non-users. Information about the proposals and opportunities to provide feedback was shared through multiple channels. Respondents

were invited to comment on the importance of libraries, the potential impact of proposed changes, and suggestions for improvement. This inclusive approach enabled non-users to contribute views on barriers to access, alternative service models, and the wider role of libraries. Of the total responses received, 117 individuals indicated that they do not currently use the library service, demonstrating that the consultation captured perspectives beyond regular users.

Consultation documents and response forms were available in paper format in all libraries and online via the Council's website at <https://n-somerset.inconsult.uk/Libraries/consultationHome>. A total of 4,403 responses were submitted through paper and online questionnaires, supplemented by additional feedback received via email, children's surveys, and informal conversations at drop-in events, bringing overall participation to over 5,000 individuals. Fourteen engagement events were held in libraries and community locations, attended by approximately 186 participants.

Briefings were delivered to all ward members, town and parish councillors, followed by email summaries encouraging wider community engagement. Articles promoting the consultation appeared in the *Town and Parish Digest* throughout the consultation period. Over 200 stakeholders were contacted directly by email and invited to participate as individuals or organisations. Additional coverage included features in *eLife*, distributed to over 100,000 email addresses in August and October. Notifications were sent via the NSC app to 21,000 registered users, and 42,000 North Somerset Library members received email invitations in August and October. Regular updates were posted on social media, and Cllr Solomon participated in an interview on BBC Radio Bristol to raise awareness.

All North Somerset schools were contacted and encouraged to share the consultation with pupils, parents, and carers. The Schools Engagement and Participation Officer also visited schools to speak directly with young people and invite contributions.

This approach reflects the Council's commitment to broad and inclusive engagement and demonstrates the extensive efforts made to raise awareness of the consultation among diverse groups across North Somerset. While it is acknowledged that no engagement process can capture every individual view, significant steps were taken to maximise participation through widespread publicity, social media activity, and prominent signage. Initial evaluation of responses supports the conclusion that awareness of the consultation was widespread.

301 (38.39%) respondents (for Weston library) indicated they had equality-related concerns. This figure may include individuals selecting multiple protected characteristics or fairness issues (e.g., disability, age, sexual orientation, low income), so it does not represent 301 unique individuals but rather the total number of selections.

The high number of equality concerns suggests that the proposed changes to opening hours and reduction in the stock budget has broad potential impacts across multiple protected groups and fairness categories.

Equality issues are not isolated to one group; they span disability, age, income, sexual orientation, and other vulnerabilities, indicating that the library plays a significant role in supporting inclusive access for diverse community members.

Are there any gaps in our evidence to support this Equality Impact Assessment? If so, what are the plans to gather this information?

An earlier iteration of this assessment acknowledged that the original small-scale survey, which was not designed to capture the views of children, resulted in gaps in understanding how young people engage with library services and how potential changes might affect them. To address this, the Council implemented a comprehensive approach during the public consultation to engage children, young people, and those working with them. Senior leaders and governors from local schools were contacted directly via email at the outset, and additional outreach included informal discussions with parents and school staff during library visits and engagement events.

The Children's Services Engagement and Participation Team promoted the consultation through social media, with posts widely reshared by community groups, and conducted in-person school visits to support young people in completing questionnaires during VOICE sessions. Some schools also distributed consultation details through their own communication channels. At Pill Library and Children's Centre, engagement extended to childminders, supported by proactive communication and reinforced through library-based activities such as Rhymetime sessions. Further promotion occurred via social media platforms and through the Friends of Pill Library group, which undertook local outreach, including market stalls, social media posts, press coverage, and poster displays. The consultation was additionally publicised through the North Somerset 'Together' network, involving a broad range of community partners. These combined efforts demonstrate the Council's commitment to inclusive engagement and widespread awareness of the consultation opportunity.

In addition, the original survey did not include feedback from non-users of libraries. To address this, the consultation was promoted widely to maximise awareness and provide as many people as possible—including those who do not currently use libraries—with the opportunity to respond.

Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

Will the project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) on any of these groups?

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.
H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None | + = Positive, - = Negative

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)		x				x	In the 2021 Census , 25.76% (27.36%+24.16%) of people in Weston-super-Mare identify themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act, having day to day activities limited a little or a lot. At Weston library 25% (59) of library survey respondents identified as having a physical or mental health condition which impacts their day-to-day life. Therefore, reduced library opening hours library will have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities.

Post consultation update

82 (11.32%) of respondents asked for disability to be considered as a fairness issue. Feedback highlighted the dependence on libraries for accessibility and wellbeing. Weston library was described as a safe, comfortable space for neurodiverse individuals (autism, ADHD) and those with mental health challenges.

Crowded or noisy spaces, bright lights, and overstimulation are major barriers for autistic and neurodiverse users.

Suggestions include quiet rooms, clear signage, and maintaining staffed hours for those who cannot use self-service due to sensory or cognitive difficulties.

Reduced hours would increase isolation and limit access to structured, calm environments essential for wellbeing.

Users with mobility impairments, wheelchair users, and those recovering from strokes responded about their reliance on accessible facilities.

Parking is mentioned as a significant barrier: lack of short-term parking near Weston Library and distance from alternative car parks creates challenges, even for blue badge holders.

Closing Weston-super-Mare Library earlier (e.g., 5 pm instead of 6 pm) would significantly affect disabled users who depend on evening access for borrowing, study, and social interaction.

Limited hours exacerbate barriers for those who cannot travel further afield due to cost, stress, or mobility constraints.

The steep ramp to enter the library and heavy books create physical challenges.

Reducing library opening hours is likely to disproportionately affect disabled and neurodiverse users by limiting access to safe, structured environments essential for wellbeing. Shorter hours may increase isolation, exacerbate mental health challenges, and create barriers for those with mobility issues who rely on accessible facilities and nearby parking. Overall, reduced availability risks significantly

				diminishing the inclusivity and accessibility of library services.
People from different ethnic groups	x		x	87% of library survey respondents identified as White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. According to the North Somerset JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) 95.7% of the overall population is White. This is notably lower than the North Somerset population average and differs from the average across all other library sites, where 96% of respondents identified within this group. <u>Post consultation update</u> 16 (2.21%) asked for race to be considered. Comments requested that foreign language users and those with English as a second language may need extra support during staffed hours.
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	x		x	49% of library survey respondents were female and 5% of survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act due to pregnancy or

			maternity. In North Somerset, Census data indicates that 51.4% of the population is women (and 50.12% in Weston), therefore men will be disproportionately affected by reduced opening hours at this branch. <u>Post consultation update</u> 35 (4.83%) asked for sex, including pregnancy or maternity to be considered. Respondents highlighted that library visits for Rhymetime sessions are highly valued by parents and children. These sessions provide opportunities for early learning, social interaction, and contribute positively to maternal mental health. Access to inclusive activities like Rhymetime helps reduce isolation for new parents and supports wellbeing during maternity.
People who are LGBTQ+	x	x	5% of library survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act, due to sexual orientation. The North Somerset Census average was 2.61%, which would indicate a higher impact on

				LGBTQ+ communities. This is higher usage rate is likely a result of community partner use of library space, rather than a reflection of the average library user. <u>Post consultation update</u> 18 (2.49%) asked for sexual orientation to be considered as an equalities issue. No specific comments were included. This assessment has been changed from medium to low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People on a low income	x		x	While we don't hold data on the deprivation level of Weston library service users, we know that 17% of library survey respondents come to the library because they cannot afford internet access at home. Others may not be able to buy books or heat their homes and therefore the closure is assessed to have a negative impact on more deprived groups. In the 2021 Census 58.41% (63.42% + 53.41%) of households in Weston-super-Mare had one or more dimension deprivation.

				<u>Post consultation update</u> Libraries provide free access to books, information, and digital resources, which is essential for individuals and families on low incomes. Respondents expressed concern that changes to opening hours could disproportionately affect those who rely on libraries for internet access, study spaces, and educational support. Libraries play a critical role in supporting literacy, learning, and social development for children from low-income households. Reduced access could widen educational inequalities and limit opportunities for enrichment. Some respondents noted that while they personally have no access issues, they are concerned about the impact on others who depend on libraries as a free and inclusive resource.
People in particular age groups	x		x	Children and elderly are more likely to use the library and are therefore disproportionately impacted by the closure of this site. 15% of Weston library

survey respondents indicated they were over 75 years of age.

Post consultation update

98 (13.54%) people requested that their age be considered. Respondents described libraries as safe, warm, and welcoming spaces for older residents, offering a non-judgmental environment. They highlighted the free access to essential resources such as Wi-Fi, computers, and books, which many elderly rely on.

For some older individuals, a visit to the library may be their only social interaction during the week. Libraries help combat loneliness and isolation by providing opportunities for informal social contact and organized activities. Access to these spaces supports mental stimulation and helps elderly remain active and connected.

Reducing the opening hours could significantly affect elderly who depend on libraries for social contact, warmth, and access to digital resources. There is also a

			risk of increased isolation and loneliness among elderly residents, particularly those with limited mobility or income and a loss of opportunities for mental stimulation and community engagement. Parents highlighted the enjoyment of visiting the library with their children but expressed concerns about limited opportunities if Weston library is no longer open on a Saturday afternoon.
People in particular faith groups	x		30 respondents at Weston library indicated that their religion, belief (or none) needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 6% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> Whilst 17 (2.35%) respondents asked for religion, belief or none to be considered, there were no specific comments. This assessment remains low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed

			have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People who are married or in a civil partnership	x		Only 10 respondents at Weston library indicated that being married or in a civil partnership needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 3% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 11 (1.52%) respondents indicated that being married or in a civil partnership needed to be considered. This assessment remains low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x		Library survey responses indicate that only 1% of library users identified as being a different gender to the one assigned at birth, with 3% preferring not to say. At Weston library, 11 respondents identified their gender as being different to the one assigned at birth and therefore any impacts are deemed negligible.

			<u>Post consultation update</u> 12 (1.66%) respondents requested that gender reassignment is considered. Comments included appreciation for raising awareness in libraries about gender reassignment and ensuring stock selection reflects and supports the trans community.
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:	x		We do not hold data for these groups; however, knowledge of the local community would indicate that these groups are not highly represented in this area. As part of the consultation process, we intend to gather more detailed data and better understand the potential impact on these groups—particularly unpaid carers—to ensure their needs and perspectives are fully considered. <u>Post consultation update</u> 12 (1.66%) people identified as being care experienced. No specific comments were included.

Digital access: Many users commented on their digital skills and the vital role Weston library plays in supporting individuals who struggle with systems including the RFID kiosks and IT services. Appreciation was given for receiving assistance with online services, printing documents, and navigating digital systems. Respondents expressed concern that prioritizing self-service models or reducing staffed hours creates barriers for those with limited digital skills. An ideology that shifts responsibility entirely to the customer is seen as exclusive and detrimental to accessibility.

Libraries provide critical access to technology for people who lack resources at home, including printing and internet services. Self-service-only periods could disadvantage those with neurodiversity, chronic health issues, or limited digital literacy.

Later opening hours at Weston Library are particularly beneficial for homeless individuals seeking warmth and for

			students who need study space. These vulnerable groups could lose safe, accessible environments for study and warmth.

Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other budget savings? Yes

The options for Weston library form part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset and any mitigations implemented to reduce the equalities impacts of the proposed changes to opening hours may increase costs in other areas of the library and council services (for example outreach costs).

Section 4 – Options

What other options have been considered?

Do nothing. The Council has declared a financial emergency: this option is not feasible as transformation is required to achieve the £433k revenue savings target included in the Council's MTFP and helps ensure that we continue to deliver sustainable services with our communities.

Consider adopting either Option A or Option C, as presented in the consultation. These options were rejected in favour of option B for the reasons outlined in section 1 of the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Section 5 – Action Plan

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	Provide training in using digital resources so that access to online services is improved.	Emma Wellard (or delegated officer)	Summer 2026
	Explore the feasibility of extending self-service hours between 16:30 to 18.00 on weekdays and 14:00 to 16:00 on Saturdays following risk assessment and discussion with partners. Advocate for the provision of alternative quiet study spaces in the library. Signpost residents who struggle to access the library to community-based activities that, while outside statutory provision, support engagement and access to resources. These activities e.g. home library service will be delivered in	As above	February 2026

	partnership with local organisations, charities, and community groups, and may be supported by volunteers to ensure sustainability and reach.		
People from different ethnic groups	The survey results suggest a comparatively more diverse user base at Weston library site, which may reflect differing patterns of library engagement. Further exploration may help to understand and support the needs of this community. Connections with community groups represented at the equalities stakeholder group will be followed up to explore this.	Emma Wellard (or delegated officer)	Autumn 2026
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	The feasibility of extending self-service hours will be explored.	Emma Wellard	February 2026
People who are LGBTQ+	Ensure that the library continues to be visibly inclusive, with signage, displays, and resources that affirm LGBTQ+ identities, even if physical access is reduced.	Emma Wellard	ongoing

People on a low income	Continue to offer free access to Wi-Fi, computers and the council services telephone.	Emma Wellard	ongoing
People in particular age groups	Provide training in using digital resources. Explore the feasibility of extending self-service hours. Advocate for the provision of quiet study space elsewhere in the library for students.	Emma Wellard	Summer 2026 February 2026 Summer 2026
All groups	Communicate the recommended changes to opening hours, including facilities available during self-service hours. Improve signposting to digital skills support.	Emma Wellard (or delegated officer)	Summer 2026

If after planned actions you anticipate negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

The proposed reduction in opening hours will reduce the time that face to face support for access to Council services for digitally excluded customers is provided in Weston-super-Mare, which is the location with the highest level of usage.

The reduction in opening hours may result in an increase in social isolation, loneliness, and digital inclusion levels in the local community.

Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with those effected?

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

Section 6 – Monitoring

What are the governance arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actions listed above and the actual impact on protected or significant groups?

A full plan will be put in place once the outcome of the consultation is known and a decision made on a way forward.

Section 7 – Publish the Assessment

How will you publish this Equality Impact Assessment?

A comprehensive version of the Equality Impact Assessment will be made available on a dedicated webpage. This will include downloadable documents and contact information for further inquiries or feedback.

Hard copies will be distributed to local libraries to ensure that individuals without internet access can review the materials.

These measures are intended to provide broad public access and encourage informed participation in the consultation process.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Winscombe Library

Directorate	Corporate Services
Service area:	Libraries
Lead Officer:	Emma Wellard
Review date:	November 2025
Updated post consultation:	December 2025
Updated Post Recommendation Report:	January 2026

Equality Impacts

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget. Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Pill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided; and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual budget

for new books and digital resources.

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Director sign off:

1. The Project

Background to project

The North Somerset Libraries Strategy (2021) outlines the requirement for libraries to adapt in response to evolving demand and financial pressures while continuing to meet statutory obligations. The Council's approved Medium Term Financial Plan, effective from April 2026, includes a 19% reduction in the Library Service budget (approximately £433,000), necessitating changes to service delivery.

To inform these changes, a public consultation was conducted between 31 July and 24 October 2025 to gather feedback on three potential options for transforming the service in line with strategic objectives and achieving the required savings. Following

consideration of a range of factors, Option B (see below) has been identified as the recommended approach. This option prioritises areas of greatest need, safeguards equitable access in communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation and delivers the necessary savings through a combination of site adjustments, reductions in staffed hours, and central budget efficiencies. It also ensures continued compliance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

The consultation engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community organisations, and residents. Feedback was collected through multiple channels, including 4,403 responses via eConsult, community engagement events, and additional input received by email. These findings have informed the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups, and detailed assessments have been prepared for each affected site.

Recommended Proposal – Option B

- Reduce staffed opening hours across all Council-run libraries, extending self-service opening hours in mitigation where appropriate.
- Seek a community-managed model for Winscombe Library (retaining LibrariesWest access); close if a viable model cannot be agreed.
- Close Worle Library because of building condition issues; provide alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away).
- Deliver c. £30,000 savings annually from the new books and digital resources budget.
- Reduce opening hours at the Healthy Living Centre Library one day a week to align with the lowest usage.
- Where libraries close, provide alternative access via outreach, developed according to community needs identified through the consultation.

Consultation feedback highlighted potential negative impacts on children and young people, older adults, disabled and neurodivergent residents, low-income households, and rural communities. Mitigations under Option B include targeted staffed hours, extended self-service with safety and accessibility controls, enhanced outreach and mobile provision, retention of Pill Library, support for a community-managed model at Winscombe, and clear pathways to volunteer supported community activities, such

as the Home Library Service and digital inclusion support. Stock reductions will be managed through focused collection development, regional resource sharing (LibrariesWest), and increased promotion of eResources.

Post consultation update

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the public consultation held between 31 July 2025 and 24 October 2025. The consultation engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community groups, and residents. Feedback was gathered through multiple channels, including 376 online responses (for Winscombe) via eConsult, a community engagement event held at Winscombe Community Centre, and additional input received via email. The findings have been used to refine the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups.

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

Essential Role in a Rural Community: Winscombe Library serves as a vital hub for a wide rural catchment area, including nearby villages such as Banwell and Sandford. Community feedback highlights the lack of public transport to alternative libraries (e.g., Patton or Congresbury), making access to library services extremely challenging—or even impossible—for residents without private transport. This barrier disproportionately affects older adults, disabled residents, and single parents.

Support for Community and Family Needs: The library delivers significant educational, cultural, and social benefits. Families particularly value its role in supporting children's literacy and cultural development through popular programs such as Rhymetime and the Summer Reading Challenge. Parents emphasize the importance of a safe, accessible environment for children during both staffed and extended self-service hours. Additionally, the library provides a warm, welcoming space for older adults and individuals at risk of social isolation.

Economic and Practical Barriers: For residents on low incomes or without access to the internet and digital devices, Winscombe Library is an essential resource for IT facilities, information access, and book borrowing. While suggestions include extending self-service hours or introducing volunteer-supported services, these options require robust training and governance to ensure sustainability and inclusivity.

Preference for Staffed Services: Although extended self-service hours are supported in principle, there is a strong community preference for staffed hours. Library staff are regarded as crucial for promoting inclusivity and accessibility, with many users—

including older adults, children, and neurodiverse individuals—relying on in-person assistance for IT support, book selection, and accessing other services.

Concerns About Community-Managed Models: While some respondents are open to exploring community-managed options, concerns remain about the financial and administrative viability of this approach, particularly given the aging population and existing pressures on potential volunteers. Retaining Winscombe within the North Somerset library network is considered essential to ensure continued access to high-quality resources and the wider LibrariesWest services.

Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers.

- **Children's Services & Family Support:** the library provides information and signposting to support for children's and family services. Changes at the library may affect referrals into local support networks.
- **Education Providers:** Local schools often rely on libraries for curriculum support, extracurricular activities, and student study spaces. Should the library close, this could limit students' access to books, research materials and technology.
- **Social & Health Services:** Libraries often serve as informal access points for health information, social service referrals, and mental health support programs. A village agent drop-in service is available at Winscombe library. They provide access to information and support, promote health and wellbeing, signpost to professional support and enable residents to maintain independence for longer. Losing this space could hinder outreach efforts.
- **Employment & Skills Training:** Access to free public wi-fi, printing and online resources will impact on delivery of council employment services. The closure will make it harder for unemployed or under-skilled individuals to access job support and community groups delivering outreach in this area will have to find alternative locations to operate. There also will be a reduction in local volunteering opportunities.
- **Local Arts & Cultural Organisations:** Libraries often host arts-related events, writing groups, and cultural activities, enriching community life. Closing this space could reduce opportunities for cultural engagement; moving to community management could potentially enhance this offer.

- **Public Access to Technology:** Many individuals rely on libraries for free internet access, public computers, printing, online learning, and communication and the library also delivers face to face council services for those who are digitally excluded. If the library closes, this will make accessing essential online services and Council services more difficult for those lacking their own internet access or the skills to engage online.

Section 2 – What do we know?

Who is likely to be affected by this project?

Community across North Somerset

Libraries are central to community cohesion, providing access to resources for education, employment, and social interaction. Their closure could disproportionately affect individuals who rely on free internet access, books, and quiet study spaces. Those who experience financial hardship may struggle to access information and recreational reading elsewhere, widening inequalities. Libraries in North Somerset operate on a district wide basis and are part of the wider LibrariesWest partnership which operates across 7 authorities in South West England (145 libraries, lending 2.5 million items). Libraries therefore offer residents free access to resources across a wider community than in their local area.

Community in a specific area (Winscombe and surrounds)

In a smaller community like Winscombe, where local resources may already be limited, the closure of a library could be particularly impactful. Residents who use the library as a gathering place for social inclusion, learning, and support services may struggle to find alternative venues. Vulnerable populations, such as elderly individuals or those with disabilities, may feel isolated due to the loss of a nearby accessible, warm space.

Council Partners

Libraries collaborate with other council services, acting as information hubs and assisting in delivering community outreach programs, for example, offering access to equipment lending and sales. Libraries provide support and signposting to North Somerset residents who are unable to access council services online. For complex enquiries, staff direct residents to a dedicated council services phone located within the library, ensuring access to the appropriate specialist support. Losing a library could mean added strain on other public services, such as job centres and community advice groups, which may need to accommodate displaced library users seeking assistance. A community managed library may not seek provide support for access to NS Council services.

North Somerset Council Employees

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. North Somerset Council are not seeking to make the required savings through redundancies, although it is likely that there will be an impact on staffing. The likely impact on staffing will not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is known. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow at that point which will affect the whole service. This period of uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

Service Users

If the library closes, regular users of library services, including students, job seekers, and families, would lose a key resource for education and development. Children could particularly suffer, as libraries play a crucial role in early literacy and access to educational programming.

Commissioned Services

Services that rely on libraries as venues for delivery—such as adult learning programs, digital inclusion initiatives, and literacy workshops—may struggle to find suitable alternatives. This disruption could impact service effectiveness and accessibility.

Voluntary/Community Groups

Local voluntary groups often use library spaces for meetings, training, and outreach. It also offers a venue to help publicise local events and activity to the community. Should the library close, the loss of this venue could limit their ability to function and promote services and activities effectively, reducing opportunities for community engagement and collaboration.

Post consultation update

The feedback underscores Winscombe Library's indispensable role as a community hub in a geographically isolated rural area, serving diverse groups including the elderly, families, low-income residents, and those with disabilities. Its closure would significantly impact vulnerable demographics, reducing access to critical resources such as books, IT services, and warm, safe spaces, while exacerbating social isolation and inequalities. Key themes emphasize the library's contribution to early childhood literacy, lifelong learning, social cohesion, and digital inclusion, with strong community preference for retaining staffed hours due to the essential support provided by professional staff. Notable quotes like *"This is the only safe, accessible space for some residents in our village"* and *"Without the library, my children would lose a critical part of their educational and social environment"* illustrate the profound impact of the library on residents' lives.

Equality Considerations

Disability: Disabled residents note the importance of maintaining accessible library services. With limited public transport and alternative locations far away, closing Winscombe disproportionately affects residents unable to travel, such as wheelchair users, those with chronic illnesses, or people with mobility issues. Additionally, IT facilities, quiet study environments, and book lending services reduce barriers to access for those with cognitive, sensory, or learning disabilities.

Age: Older residents rely heavily on Winscombe Library as a social hub and an inclusive space offering warm, safe environments to combat isolation. For young children, the library is critical to develop early literacy and foster a love of reading through activities like Rhymetime and the summer reading challenge. Parents and carers benefit from out-of-school library programming.

Race: Respondents identified the importance of retaining staffed services to ensure inclusivity for those for whom English is not their first language. Libraries provide essential linguistic and literacy support, which cannot be replaced by digital services or unstaffed facilities.

Socio-Economic Inequality: low-income individuals and families benefit from free access to IT facilities and books. Winscombe Library plays a vital role in reducing the disparities caused by digital and financial exclusion.

Fairness Issues

Rural Isolation and Access Inequities: Closing Winscombe Library would disproportionately affect residents in an isolated rural area with poor transport links, especially those without private vehicles. Older adults, disabled individuals, and low-income families would face significant barriers to accessing alternative libraries. Unlike urban areas with multiple options, this rural community lacks comparable hubs, highlighting a clear rural-urban disparity.

Socio-Economic Inequalities: Economically disadvantaged residents rely on free access to books, IT services, and resources. Closure would deepen financial inequalities by limiting opportunities for education, job applications, and literacy support. Maintaining fair access to these services is essential to prevent widening the gap between secure and vulnerable populations.

Volunteer Reliance and Responsibility: Expecting the community to sustain services through volunteer-run models is seen as unfair. Many potential volunteers are elderly or time-constrained, making this approach unrealistic and inequitable.

Loss of Professional Support: Professional staff are crucial for inclusivity and accessibility. Moving to self-service or community-managed models would disadvantage vulnerable users, including elderly, disabled, and neurodivergent residents who depend on staff assistance.

Fair Allocation of Council Resources: Residents question whether council decisions fairly consider rural needs. Many feel closures disproportionately impact vulnerable groups and reflect a bias toward urban areas.

Safeguarding Community Well-Being: The library is one of the few warm, safe, and social spaces in the area. Losing it would unfairly strip residents of a vital hub for community interaction and mutual support.

Feedback strongly links fairness to equity. Residents argue that closure or reduced services would impose an unjust burden on vulnerable populations, deepen socio-economic and geographic disadvantages, and undermine rural community life. They call for decisions that prioritize fair resource allocation and equal access to essential services. The unfair disparities in access to crucial resources for those unable to reach alternative services, reinforcing the library's role in promoting both equality and fairness within the community can be summed up in this quote; *'Without the library, those of us who can't travel would lose access to books, computers, and, most importantly, a sense of community'*.

What data or evidence do you have to inform this Equality Impact Assessment?

To inform this Equality Impact Assessment, we gathered a range of data sources to ensure a thorough understanding of library usage and community needs. An initial survey was conducted across all branches between 24 March and 18 April 2025, collecting direct insights from library users.

We also analysed historical membership data from the library management system to identify usage trends across the district and incorporated information from council planning teams and wider demographic statistics to reflect the broader community context.

Since the survey, the evidence base has been strengthened with feedback from the recent Library Services Transformation Consultation. This combined data informed the development of final options and recommendations, which will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Who have you consulted with as a part of this project OR who do you plan to consult with?

As part of this project, a twelve-week public consultation was undertaken from 31 July 2025 to 24 October 2025 to explore user needs and assess potential impacts of the proposed options on protected groups. The consultation provided an opportunity for

engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community partners, volunteers, and local communities. This process enabled the collection of valuable feedback and ensured that diverse perspectives were considered in decision-making.

Prior to the consultation, a range of data sources was gathered to develop a comprehensive understanding of library usage and community needs. This included a district-wide library survey conducted between 24 March and 18 April 2025 across all branches, including Winscombe, to capture insights directly from service users.

To ensure fairness and transparency, the consultation was widely publicised and made accessible to both library users and non-users. Information about the proposals and opportunities to provide feedback was shared through multiple channels. Respondents were invited to comment on the importance of libraries, the potential impact of proposed changes, and suggestions for improvement. This inclusive approach enabled non-users to contribute views on barriers to access, alternative service models, and the wider role of libraries. Of the total responses received, 117 individuals indicated that they do not currently use the library service, demonstrating that the consultation captured perspectives beyond regular users.

Consultation documents and response forms were available in paper format in all libraries and online via the Council's website <https://n-somerset.inconsult.uk/Libraries/consultationHome>. A total of 4,403 responses were submitted through paper and online questionnaires, supplemented by additional feedback received via email, children's surveys, and informal conversations at drop-in events, bringing overall participation to over 5,000 individuals. Fourteen engagement events were held in libraries and community locations, attended by approximately 186 participants.

Briefings were delivered to all ward members, town and parish councillors, followed by email summaries encouraging wider community engagement. Articles promoting the consultation appeared in the *Town and Parish Digest* throughout the consultation period. Over 200 stakeholders were contacted directly by email and invited to participate as individuals or organisations. Additional coverage included features in *eLife*, distributed to over 100,000 email addresses in August and October. Notifications were sent via the NSC app to 21,000 registered users, and 42,000 North Somerset Library members received email invitations in August and October. Regular updates were posted on social media, and Cllr Solomon participated in an interview on BBC Radio Bristol to raise awareness.

All North Somerset schools were contacted and encouraged to share the consultation with pupils, parents, and carers. The Schools Engagement and Participation Officer also visited schools to speak directly with young people and invite contributions.

This approach reflects the Council's commitment to broad and inclusive engagement and demonstrates the extensive efforts made to raise awareness of the consultation among diverse groups across North Somerset. While it is acknowledged that no engagement process can capture every individual view, significant steps were taken to maximise participation through widespread publicity, social media activity, and prominent signage. Initial evaluation of responses supports the conclusion that awareness of the consultation was widespread.

157 (41.76%) respondents (for Winscombe library) indicated they had equality-related concerns. This figure may include individuals selecting multiple protected characteristics or fairness issues (e.g., disability, age, sexual orientation, low income), so it does not represent 157 unique individuals but rather the total number of selections.

The high number of equality concerns suggests that the proposed closure or transfer to community managed model has broad potential impacts across multiple protected groups and fairness categories.

Equality issues are not isolated to one group; they span disability, age, income, sexual orientation, and other vulnerabilities, indicating that the library plays a significant role in supporting inclusive access for diverse community members.

Are there any gaps in our evidence to support this Equality Impact Assessment? If so, what are the plans to gather this information?

An earlier iteration of this assessment acknowledged that the original small-scale survey, which was not designed to capture the views of children, resulted in gaps in understanding how young people engage with library services and how potential changes might affect them. To address this, the Council implemented a comprehensive approach during the public consultation to engage children, young people, and those working with them. Senior leaders and governors from local schools were contacted directly via email at the outset, and additional outreach included informal discussions with parents and school staff during library visits and engagement events.

Page 457
The Children's Services Engagement and Participation Team promoted the consultation through social media, with posts widely reshared by community groups, and conducted in-person school visits to support young people in completing questionnaires during VOICE sessions. Some schools also distributed consultation details through their own communication channels. At Pill Library and Children's Centre, engagement extended to childminders, supported by proactive communication and reinforced through library-based activities such as Rhymetime sessions. Further promotion occurred via social media platforms and through the Friends of Pill Library group, which undertook local outreach, including market stalls, social media posts, press coverage, and poster displays. The consultation was additionally publicised through the North Somerset 'Together' network, involving a broad range of community partners. These combined efforts demonstrate the Council's commitment to inclusive engagement and widespread awareness of the consultation opportunity.

In addition, the original survey did not include feedback from non-users of libraries. To address this, the consultation was promoted widely to maximise awareness and provide as many people as possible—including those who do not currently use libraries—with the opportunity to respond.

Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

Will the project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) on any of these groups?

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.
H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None | + = Positive, - = Negative

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)			x			x	In the 2021 Census, 20.52% (11.36% + 9.16%) of people in the Banwell & Winscombe area identify themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act, having day to day activities limited a little or a lot. At Winscombe library 13.04% (12 out of 92) of library survey respondents identified as having a physical or mental health condition which impacts their day-to-day life. Therefore, should the library close, this

would have a relatively low impact on people with disabilities.

Post consultation update

39 (10.37%) respondents expressed significant barriers to accessing other libraries if Winscombe library closes. Winscombe Library is a vital resource for residents with disabilities, including those with mobility challenges, chronic illnesses, sensory impairments, and neurodiverse conditions such as autism and ADHD. For many, the library's familiar, calm environment is essential for accessibility and comfort. Respondents highlighted that larger, busier libraries can be overwhelming for neurodiverse individuals, making Winscombe's smaller setting ideal. One parent shared that their autistic son finds alternative libraries too stressful, while others emphasized the importance of staff support for those who struggle with technology or require assistance. Closure would create significant barriers for disabled residents, who may be unable to travel or adapt to new spaces, leading to

					disproportionate exclusion from essential services.
People from different ethnic groups	x				97.8% of library survey respondents identified as White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. According to the North Somerset JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) 95.7% of the overall population is White. <u>Post consultation update</u> 4 (1.06%) people asked for race to be considered as an equality issue. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	x		x		66% of library survey respondents were female and 5% of survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act due to pregnancy or maternity. In North Somerset, Census data indicates that 51.4% of the population is women (and 51.54% in Winscombe),

therefore women will be disproportionately affected by a closure at this branch.

Should the library close, this would result in the discontinuation of services such as Rhyme Time for pre-school children and their parents / carers. Evidence suggests that participation in such sessions can have a positive impact on maternal mental health, offering opportunities for social connection, routine, and support during the early stages of parenthood. The removal of this provision may therefore disproportionately affect new mothers and primary carers, particularly those experiencing isolation or mental health challenges.

Post consultation update

19 people asked for sex, and / or pregnancy / maternity to be considered as an equalities issue. The library provides a safe, accessible environment for parents and carers, offering early literacy programs such as Rhymetime and fostering social connections among families. In a rural area with few alternatives, these services

			are particularly valued. Respondents stressed that closures would create barriers for parents managing mobility with pushchairs or young children, especially those without private transport. Mothers on low incomes expressed concern about losing affordable educational resources for their children, reinforcing the library's role in supporting family development.
People who are LGBTQ+	x		4% of library survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act, due to sexual orientation. The North Somerset Census average was 2.61%, which would indicate a higher impact on LGBTQ+ communities. This higher usage rate is likely the result of community partner use of library space, rather than a reflection of the average library user. <u>Post consultation update</u> 4 (1.06%) people asked for sexual orientation to be considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have

					not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People on a low income	x		x		While we don't hold data on the deprivation level of Winscombe library service users, we know that 17% of library survey respondents come to the library because they cannot afford internet access at home. Others may not be able to buy books or heat their homes and therefore the closure is assessed to have a negative impact on more deprived groups. In the 2021 Census 50.35% of households in Banwell & Winscombe had one or more dimension of deprivation. <u>Post consultation update</u> Closures would disproportionately affect low-income households that rely on free access to books, IT services, and community programs. Respondents noted that "books can be an expensive luxury," making the library indispensable for families with young children. Lack of affordable public transport and parking charges at some alternative options further compounds financial strain, leaving

				economically disadvantaged residents with few alternatives for education and connectivity.
People in particular age groups	x		x	Children and elderly are more likely to use the library and are therefore disproportionately impacted by the closure of this site. 24% of Winscombe library survey respondents indicated they were over 75 years of age. <u>Post consultation update</u> 70 (18.62%) people asked for age to be considered in relation to fairness. Older residents rely heavily on Winscombe Library for social contact, mental stimulation, and access to books and IT services. Limited mobility, lack of transport, and low digital confidence make alternatives impractical. Respondents noted that closures would isolate elderly further, as they are less likely to engage with online resources or travel long distances. The library also supports younger residents, particularly children who depend on parents for transport. One

			family reported that their 7-year-old son would stop using library services entirely if access became too difficult. The library's role as a safe, welcoming space for all ages is central to community well-being.
People in particular faith groups	x		In our recent survey, only 8 respondents at Winscombe library indicated that their religion, belief (or none) needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 6% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. Additionally, Winscombe Library does not currently run any specific activities aimed at particular faith groups. <u>Post consultation update</u> 7 respondents asked for religion to be considered in relation to equalities. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as none in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.

People who are married or in a civil partnership	x		Only 4 respondents at Winscombe library indicated that being married or in a civil partnership needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 3% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 8 (2.13%) people asked for marital status to be considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as none in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x		Library survey responses indicate that only 1% of library users identified as being a different gender to the one assigned at birth, with 3% preferring not to say. At Winscombe library, 1 respondent preferred not to say their sex, and 1 respondent identified their gender as being different to the one assigned at birth and therefore any impacts are deemed negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u>

				4 (1.06%) people asked for gender reassignment to be considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as none in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:	x			We do not hold data for these groups; however, knowledge of the local community would indicate that these groups are not highly represented in this area. As part of the consultation process, we intend to gather more detailed data and better understand the potential impact on these groups—particularly unpaid carers—to ensure their needs and perspectives are fully considered. <u>Post consultation update</u> Rural population: Residents expressed strong concerns about fairness in resource allocation. Rural communities like Winscombe face unique disadvantages, including poor transport, limited amenities, and fewer free public spaces. Closing the library would exacerbate these inequities,

disproportionately impacting groups already vulnerable due to age, disability, and low income. One respondent noted that Winscombe has “the oldest, most disabled, and most female population,” making it particularly susceptible to harm from service reductions. Suggestions to prioritize urban areas were viewed as inherently unfair and discriminatory against rural residents.

Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other budget savings?

Yes

The options for Winscombe library form part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset and any mitigations implemented to reduce the equalities impacts of this transfer to a community managed library, or closure may increase costs in other areas of the library and council services (for example outreach costs). The costs of potential increased outreach activity to ensure that the council continues to meet its statutory obligations and local need has been included in the budget proposals.

Section 4 – Options

What other options have been considered?

Do nothing. The Council has declared a financial emergency: this option is not feasible as transformation is required to achieve the £433k revenue savings target included in the Council's MTFP and helps ensure that we continue to deliver sustainable services with our communities.

Consider adopting either Option A or Option C, as presented in the consultation. These options were rejected in favour of option B for the reasons outlined in section 1 of the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Section 5

Action Plan – to seek a community-managed model for Winscombe library

The Council will provide governance and training support to develop a community supported solution. LibrariesWest access will be retained to ensure continuity of services and resource sharing. Clear service standards will be defined, and a contingency plan will be in place should closure become necessary, including outreach activities, and signposting to transport options.

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	Work with the community to ensure the library remains accessible and inclusive. Provide training and support on inclusive service delivery. Signpost residents who struggle to access the library on open days to community-based activities that, while outside statutory provision, support	Emma Wellard	Autumn 2026

	engagement and access to resources. These activities e.g. home library service will be delivered in partnership with local organisations, charities, and community groups, and may be supported by volunteers to ensure sustainability and reach.		
Women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	Work with the community to continue to provide / promote access to resources and training on women's health and maternity topics.	Emma Wellard	Spring 2027
People who are LGBTQ+	Offer guidance on inclusive language and representation in displays. Depending on the community model which emerges, supply a range of stock to the library based on existing collection development principles.	Emma Wellard	Spring 2027
People on a low income	Depending on the community model which emerges, continue to offer free access to Wi-Fi and computers.	Emma Wellard	Spring 2027

	Explore provision of support to access council services.		
People in particular age groups – children and elderly	Provide training and resources for volunteers to run sessions for children and elderly. Provide information to signpost children aged 0-19 and their families to Family Hubs and other initiatives.	Emma Wellard	Spring 2027

after planned actions you anticipate negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

Impacts of the reduction and removal of access to Council services for digitally excluded customers cannot be entirely mitigated by community partners (who may or may not wish to support this). This is due to the required levels of data protection and knowledge of council services and teams required to offer this support.

Whilst the Council will continue to deliver library services in alternative ways should the library close, the wider benefits of accessing library services through a physical building and the social connection this brings may be lost. This is likely to result in an increase in social isolation, loneliness, cohesion and deprivation in the local community.

Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with those effected?

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

Section 6 – Monitoring

What are the governance arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actions listed above and the actual impact on protected or significant groups?

A full plan will be put in place once the outcome of the consultation is known and a decision made on a way forward.

Section 7 – Publish the Assessment

How will you publish this Equality Impact Assessment?

A comprehensive version of the Equality Impact Assessment will be made available on a dedicated webpage. This will include downloadable documents and contact information for further inquiries or feedback.

Hard copies will be distributed to local libraries to ensure that individuals without internet access can review the materials.

These measures are intended to provide broad public access and encourage informed participation in the consultation process.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Worle Library

Directorate:	Corporate Services
Service area:	Libraries
Lead Officer:	Emma Wellard
Review date:	November 2025
Updated post consultation:	December 2025

Updated Post Recommendation Report: January 2026

Equality Impacts

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget. Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Pill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided;

and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual budget for new books and digital resources.

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low	No

Director sign off:<<Text here>>

1. The Project

Background to project

The North Somerset Libraries Strategy (2021) outlines the requirement for libraries to adapt in response to evolving demand and financial pressures while continuing to meet statutory obligations. The Council's approved Medium Term Financial Plan, effective

from April 2026, includes a 19% reduction in the Library Service budget (approximately £433,000), necessitating changes to service delivery.

To meet these savings targets, the option agreed to go to public consultation in summer 2025 included a proposal to close Worle library. The community are invited to help shape the offer locally. This document is designed to assess the equalities impacts this will have on the local community, library service provision and staff.

To inform these changes, a public consultation was conducted between 31 July and 24 October 2025 to gather feedback on three potential options for transforming the service in line with strategic objectives and achieving the required savings. Following consideration of a range of factors, Option B (see below) has been identified as the recommended approach. This option prioritises areas of greatest need, safeguards equitable access in communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation and delivers the necessary savings through a combination of site adjustments, reductions in staffed hours, and central budget efficiencies. It also ensures continued compliance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

The consultation engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community organisations, and residents. Feedback was collected through multiple channels, including 4,403 responses via eConsult, community engagement events, and additional input received by email. These findings have informed the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups, and detailed assessments have been prepared for each affected site.

Recommended Proposal – Option B

- Reduce staffed opening hours across all Council-run libraries, extending self-service opening hours in mitigation where appropriate.
- Seek a community-managed model for Winscombe Library (retaining LibrariesWest access); close if a viable model cannot be agreed.
- Close Worle Library because of building condition issues; provide alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away).
- Deliver c. £30,000 savings annually from the new books and digital resources budget.
- Reduce opening hours at the Healthy Living Centre Library one day a week to align with the lowest usage.

- Where libraries close, provide alternative access via outreach, developed according to community needs identified through the consultation.

Consultation feedback highlighted potential negative impacts on children and young people, older adults, disabled and neurodivergent residents, low-income households, and rural communities. Mitigations under Option B include targeted staffed hours, extended self-service with safety and accessibility controls, enhanced outreach and mobile provision, retention of Pill Library, support for a community-managed model at Winscombe, and clear pathways to volunteer supported community activities, such as the Home Library Service and digital inclusion support. Stock reductions will be managed through focused collection development, regional resource sharing (LibrariesWest), and increased promotion of eResources.

Page 486 Post consultation update

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the findings and feedback from the public consultation held between 31 July 2025 and 24 October 2025. The consultation engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community groups, and residents. Feedback was gathered through multiple channels, including 561 online responses (for Worle) via eConsult, two community engagement events held in Worle library, and additional input received via email. The findings have been used to refine the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups.

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

- **Accessibility and Transport Barriers:** Many respondents stressed that alternative libraries (Campus or Weston Town) are not easily accessible due to poor public transport, distance, and parking challenges. For those without cars, the 1.5-mile distance to Campus feels prohibitive, especially for older residents, disabled individuals, and families with young children.
- **Role as a Community Hub:** Worle Library is described as a central, well-loved hub for the village, providing more than book lending:
 - Social contact for elderly residents.

- o Safe, welcoming space for neurodiverse individuals and families.
- o Children's Centre services, including baby groups, feeding support, and midwife visits.

Closure is seen as contributing to the decline of local amenities, similar to the loss of banks.

- **Impact on Vulnerable Groups:** Libraries are viewed as lifelines for those facing isolation, low income, or digital exclusion.

Disproportionate impact on:

- o Elderly residents in warden-controlled housing.
- o Disabled and neurodiverse individuals who need quiet, low-stress environments.
- o Families with young children who rely on local services for early years development.

- **Educational and Digital Inclusion:** Libraries support literacy, homework, and research for children and young people. They provide essential IT access and printing services for those without home internet or devices. Concerns raised about the impact on children's learning and school engagement if local provision is lost.

- **Fairness and Consultation Process:** Strong perception that proposals are unfair:

- o Worle Library is well-used and has outperformed pre-Covid levels yet is proposed for closure over less-used sites.
- o Lack of options in the consultation to keep Worle open.
- o Insufficient clarity on what happens to Children's Centre services.

Comments questioned whether building maintenance issues were foreseeable when the library moved from its previous location.

- **Emotional and Cultural Value:** Worle Library is seen as a safe, neutral space that promotes inclusion and community cohesion. It provides opportunities for cultural exchange and social interaction, which are increasingly rare in other public spaces.

Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers.

- **Local Charities & Non-Profits:** Many charities rely on libraries as meeting spaces, hubs for outreach programs, or services. Closing the library could disrupt their ability to engage with the local community effectively.
- **Community Groups:** Groups such as book clubs, job seekers' support groups, digital inclusion programs, often use library space. Without an alternative venue, these services may be harder to maintain.

- **Children's Services & Family Support:** The library is co-located with a children's centre; however, children's services have reduced their activities in Worle. Castle Batch and Locking Castle children's centres are within 1.5 miles. Children's Centres are currently considering what the service offer could look like in Worle and think that services could be delivered in the following way: Family Hubs will provide an outreach service in the Worle area of North Somerset; digital offer – providing online access to information, advice and support services in the Worle area.
- **Education Providers:** Local schools often rely on libraries for curriculum support, extracurricular activities, and student study spaces. Mendip Green Primary School regularly have class visits to the library. The closure could limit students' access to books, research materials, and quiet study environments.
- **Social & Health Services:** Libraries often serve as informal access points for health information, social service referrals, and mental health support programs. Losing this space could hinder outreach efforts.
- **Employment & Skills Training:** Access to free public wi-fi, printing and online resources will impact on delivery of council employment services. The closure will make it harder for unemployed or under-skilled individuals to access job support and community groups delivering outreach in this area will have to find alternative locations to operate. There also will be a reduction in local volunteering opportunities.
- **Local Arts & Cultural Organisations:** Libraries often host arts-related events, writing groups, and cultural activities, enriching community life. Closing this space could reduce opportunities for cultural engagement.
- **Public Access to Technology:** Many individuals rely on libraries for free internet access, public computers, printing, online learning, and communication and the library also delivers face to face council services for those who are digitally excluded. The closure will limit digital inclusion and make accessing essential online services and Council services more difficult for the most disadvantaged.

Section 2 – What do we know?

Who is likely to be affected by this project?

Community across North Somerset

Libraries are central to community cohesion, providing access to resources for education, employment, and social interaction. Their closure could disproportionately affect individuals who rely on free internet access, books, and quiet study spaces. Those who experience financial hardship may struggle to access information and recreational reading elsewhere, widening inequalities.

Community in a specific area (Worle and surrounds)

In a community like Worle, the closure of a library could be disruptive. Residents who use the library as a gathering place for social inclusion, learning, and support services may struggle to find alternative venues. Vulnerable populations, such as elderly individuals or those with disabilities, may feel isolated due to the loss of a nearby accessible space.

Council Partners

Libraries often collaborate with council services, offering information hubs and assisting in delivering community outreach programs. Losing a library could mean added strain on other public services, such as job centres and community advice groups, which may need to accommodate displaced library users seeking assistance. Worle Library is used by the council during elections as a polling station, an alternative venue will need to be identified. Worle Library staff also provide a front door for non-digitally engaged residents seeking help to access Council services.

North Somerset Council Employees

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. North Somerset Council are not seeking to make the required savings through redundancies, although it is likely that there will be an impact on staffing. The likely impact on staffing will

not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is known. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow at that point which will affect the whole service. This period of uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

Service Users

Regular users of library services, including students, job seekers, and families, would lose a key resource for education and development. Children could be particularly impacted, as libraries play a crucial role in early literacy and access to educational programming.

Commissioned Services

Services that rely on libraries as venues for delivery—such as adult learning programs, digital inclusion initiatives, and literacy workshops—may struggle to find suitable alternatives. This disruption could impact service effectiveness and accessibility.

Voluntary/Community Groups

Local voluntary groups often use library spaces for meetings, training, and outreach. The loss of this venue could limit their ability to function effectively, reducing opportunities for community engagement and collaboration.

The closure of a library has significant social and economic repercussions, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities.

Post consultation update

The consultation confirmed that Worle Library is a vital community resource, particularly for older residents, families with young children, neurodiverse individuals, and those with disabilities or low incomes. Respondents emphasized that access to local libraries is a necessity, not a privilege, and that even small changes to library services can disproportionately affect vulnerable groups—

especially when considered alongside other council service reductions, such as the loss of printed *North Somerset Life* and reduced IT and printing access.

Feedback highlighted that Worle Library provides a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space where people can access books, IT facilities, and face-to-face support. For many, the library is a lifeline—offering human interaction, advice, and a warm environment that cannot be replicated by digital services or unstaffed models. Concerns were raised that alternative sites, such as The Campus or Weston Town Library, are impractical due to distance, poor public transport, and prohibitive travel costs. For some, fatigue, pain, or visual impairment make longer journeys impossible.

The need to retain Worle Library in relation to equality and fairness is summed up by a quote from the consultation responses:

"Closing Worle Library would penalise small children, elderly residents, and disabled people who cannot travel further afield. It is a vital space within the community."

Page 491 Equality Considerations

- **Protected Characteristics:** Respondents identified as neurodiverse (ADHD, autism), dyslexic, visually impaired, and physically disabled. Quiet spaces and predictable environments were highlighted as essential for neurodiverse users.
- **Age:** Elderly residents rely on the library for social contact, digital inclusion, and access to council services. Many live in nearby retirement developments and cannot travel to alternative sites.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity:** Parents with young children depend on the Children's Centre services, play sessions, and accessible support within walking distance.
- **Mental Health:** Libraries were described as providing structure and reducing isolation for those experiencing depression or anxiety.
- **Religion and Community Cohesion:** Libraries were noted as one of the few remaining spaces where people from different cultural and faith backgrounds can meet, fostering inclusion at a time of community tensions.
- **Socio-economic Barriers:** Low-income families and pensioners rely on free resources and cannot afford transport to alternative libraries. Many do not have home internet or devices.

Fairness Issues

- **Impact of Service Reductions:** Respondents stressed that changes to library services should be considered alongside other council cuts, as combined impacts fall hardest on vulnerable groups.
- **Access and Mobility:** Many respondents cannot drive or walk long distances due to health conditions, fatigue, or disability. Closure would disproportionately impact these groups.
- **Digital Exclusion:** Not everyone has access to computers or internet at home. Libraries provide essential IT facilities and printing services.
- **Consultation Accessibility:** Concerns were raised about the complexity of the consultation form for people with ADHD, dyslexia, or limited English proficiency.
- **Representation of Data:** Respondents questioned why a well-used library is proposed for closure over less-used sites and raised concerns about fairness in decision-making.
- **Community Oversight:** Comments warned that if libraries are handed over to community groups without council oversight, inclusivity and strategic aims could be compromised.

Additional Context

- Worle Library is easily accessible for children and elderly and offers a calm environment for study and reflection.
- It provides essential services such as free IT access, advice, and a warm space during winter months.
- Closure would risk increasing isolation, reducing educational opportunities, and widening health inequalities.
- Respondents expressed concern that previous library changes have already reduced local provision, and further loss would be detrimental to community wellbeing.
- The library supports local schools, childminders, and families, hosting regular events that promote literacy, digital skills, and social interaction.

The consultation demonstrated strong concerns about equality and fairness. Closing Worle Library would disproportionately impact neurodiverse individuals, those with disabilities, older residents, carers, and low-income families. It is considered that maintaining local provision and ensuring inclusive service design are essential to mitigate adverse impacts.

What data or evidence do you have to inform this Equality Impact Assessment?

To inform this Equality Impact Assessment, we gathered a range of data sources to ensure a thorough understanding of library usage and community needs. An initial survey was conducted across all branches between 24 March and 18 April 2025, collecting direct insights from library users.

We also analysed historical membership data from the library management system to identify usage trends across the district and incorporated information from council planning teams and wider demographic statistics to reflect the broader community context.

Since the survey, the evidence base has been strengthened with feedback from the recent Library Services Transformation Consultation. This combined data informed the development of final options and recommendations, which will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Who have you consulted with as a part of this project OR who do you plan to consult with?

As part of this project, a twelve-week public consultation was undertaken from 31 July 2025 to 24 October 2025 to explore user needs and assess potential impacts of the proposed options on protected groups. The consultation provided an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community partners, volunteers, and local communities. This process enabled the collection of valuable feedback and ensured that diverse perspectives were considered in decision-making.

Prior to the consultation, a range of data sources was gathered to develop a comprehensive understanding of library usage and community needs. This included a district-wide library survey conducted between 24 March and 18 April 2025 across all branches, including Worle Library, to capture insights directly from service users.

To ensure fairness and transparency, the consultation was widely publicised and made accessible to both library users and non-users. Information about the proposals and opportunities to provide feedback was shared through multiple channels. Respondents were invited to comment on the importance of libraries, the potential impact of proposed changes, and suggestions for improvement. This inclusive approach enabled non-users to contribute views on barriers to access, alternative service models, and the wider role of libraries. Of the total responses received, 117 individuals indicated that they do not currently use the library service, demonstrating that the consultation captured perspectives beyond regular users.

Consultation documents and response forms were available in paper format in all libraries and online via the Council's website at <https://n-somerset.inconsult.uk/Libraries/consultationHome>. A total of 4,403 responses were submitted through paper and online questionnaires, supplemented by additional feedback received via email, children's surveys, and informal conversations at drop-in events, bringing overall participation to over 5,000 individuals. Fourteen engagement events were held in libraries and community locations, attended by approximately 186 participants.

Briefings were delivered to all ward members, town and parish councillors, followed by email summaries encouraging wider community engagement. Articles promoting the consultation appeared in the *Town and Parish Digest* throughout the consultation period. Over 200 stakeholders were contacted directly by email and invited to participate as individuals or organisations. Additional coverage included features in *eLife*, distributed to over 100,000 email addresses in August and October. Notifications were sent via the NSC app to 21,000 registered users, and 42,000 North Somerset Library members received email invitations in August and October. Regular updates were posted on social media, and Cllr Solomon participated in an interview on BBC Radio Bristol to raise awareness.

All North Somerset schools were contacted and encouraged to share the consultation with pupils, parents, and carers. The Schools Engagement and Participation Officer also visited schools to speak directly with young people and invite contributions.

This approach reflects the Council's commitment to broad and inclusive engagement and demonstrates the extensive efforts made to raise awareness of the consultation among diverse groups across North Somerset. While it is acknowledged that no engagement process can capture every individual view, significant steps were taken to maximise participation through widespread publicity, social media activity, and prominent signage. Initial evaluation of responses supports the conclusion that awareness of the consultation was widespread.

24 respondents at Worle library asked for specific fairness issues to be considered e.g. age, disability. This was significantly lower than other libraries, however, in free text answers, 131 (24.78%) respondents (for Worle library) indicated they had equality-related concerns. This figure may include individuals selecting multiple protected characteristics or fairness issues (e.g., disability, age, sexual orientation, low income), so it does not represent 131 unique individuals but rather the total number of selections.

The high number of equality concerns suggests that the proposed closure has broad potential impacts across multiple protected groups and fairness categories. Equality issues are not isolated to one group; they span disability, age, income, sexual orientation, and other vulnerabilities, indicating that the library plays a significant role in supporting inclusive access for diverse community members.

Comments queried the future of the children's centre service operating from the building. Feedback highlighted the importance of maintaining children's centre activities within the Worle High Street area, as relocation could affect accessibility for families with young children, pregnant people, and carers, particularly those without private transport. Concerns were raised about the potential reduction of early help and children's centre services in Worle and across North Somerset, noting that these services are vital for vulnerable families and should be subject to separate consultation. These points indicate that changes to the children's centre offer could have significant implications for age, pregnancy/maternity, and socio-economic groups.

In addition, a comprehensive response was submitted by Digilocal, a code club run by volunteers who have been operating locally since 2015 and at Worle since 2022. Their feedback highlights the importance of Worle Library as a venue for Code Club

Many of our students walk to the premises. The loss of this club to this area would be an outcome inconsistent with one of the key missions of our MP as Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Digital Inclusion:

1. Code Clubs: Catalysts for Digital Literacy and Opportunity. Code clubs hosted by libraries like Worle offer free, inclusive, and accessible digital education for children aged 8 upwards. In an increasingly technology-driven world, these clubs equip participants with essential 21st-century skills including participants from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Children from all backgrounds — including those without home internet, access to devices, or parental technical knowledge — benefit from hands-on, supported opportunities to explore coding, computational thinking, and problem solving.

2. Educational Goals of Code Clubs. Code clubs directly support local and national education priorities, including:

- Digital Literacy: Teaching young people to navigate and create with technology, not just consume it.
- Computational Thinking: Developing logical thinking, step-by-step problem solving, and creativity through structured programming activities.
- Confidence Building: Helping children gain self-esteem by completing real-world projects, often culminating in apps, websites, or games they create themselves.
- Teamwork & Collaboration: Encouraging peer-to-peer learning, mentoring, and group challenges that build interpersonal and communication skills.
- Career Pathway Awareness: Providing insight into future careers in technology, robotics, cybersecurity, game design, and AI — especially important for girls and underrepresented groups in STEM.
- Resilience and Perseverance: Learning from bugs and failures in code nurtures a growth mindset and tenacity.
- Critical Thinking & Logic: Building core cognitive skills aligned with the computing curriculum.

These goals not only reflect priorities in the national curriculum for computing and STEM but also align with wider council objectives such as employability, social inclusion, and economic resilience.

3. Libraries as Inclusive Learning Hubs:

- Unlike schools, libraries offer informal, non-pressurised environments where children can explore interests outside the standard curriculum. Code clubs run in libraries:
- Are free and open to all, regardless of school catchment.

- Provide safe spaces with volunteer mentors.
- Help bridge the digital divide for children in disadvantaged communities.
- Encourage intergenerational participation.

4. Wider Benefits to the Community

Code clubs attract families into libraries, strengthening community ties and raising awareness of other resources, from books to digital access and homework support. They increase footfall and engagement in a way that justifies investment, not closure.

These clubs provide free, inclusive digital education for children aged 8 and above, equipping them with essential skills such as coding, computational thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork. They also build confidence, resilience, and awareness of future career pathways in technology—particularly for underrepresented groups in STEM, including girls.

Libraries offer a non-pressurised, informal environment where children from all backgrounds can participate, regardless of school catchment or home resources. This is especially critical for families without internet access, devices, or parental technical knowledge. Code Clubs help bridge the digital divide, promote social inclusion, and align with national education priorities and council objectives around employability and economic resilience.

The loss of Worle Library would mean the loss of this service, reducing opportunities for digital literacy and community engagement. It would also undermine wider goals of tackling digital exclusion and supporting disadvantaged communities.

Equality Implications

- **Age:** Children and young people benefit directly from Code Clubs, which support educational attainment and future career opportunities.
- **Socio-economic Status:** Clubs provide free access to technology and learning for families who cannot afford devices or internet at home, reducing digital inequality.
- **Sex:** Code Clubs actively encourage participation from girls and underrepresented groups in STEM, promoting gender equality in technology fields.

- **Disability and Neurodiversity:** Libraries offer a calm, supportive environment for neurodiverse children who may struggle in formal classroom settings, ensuring inclusive access to digital skills.
- **Community Cohesion:** Libraries hosting Code Clubs foster intergenerational learning and social inclusion, creating safe spaces for diverse communities.

Impact of Closure: Removing Worle Library would disproportionately affect children from low-income families, neurodiverse learners, and girls seeking STEM opportunities. It would also reduce access to free, inclusive digital education, widening the digital divide and limiting equal opportunities for future employment.

Beyond individual responses, the consultation prompted significant community advocacy. Support included intervention from the local MP, Dan Aldridge. *I am writing to express my strong desire that a library function is maintained in Worle. I think we all agree, libraries are vital community assets, offering not only access to books, other media, vital information but are also safe, inclusive spaces for learning, connection, and support.*

In conjunction with the MP, the local Labour Party led a leaflet campaign encouraging residents to take part in the consultation and share their views. The leaflet stated *Worle Library isn't just a building – it's a community lifeline. It's the only library in North Somerset that's busier now than it was before Covid, with thousands of visits every year and hundreds of local events. High repair costs mean North Somerset Council say they can't afford to keep the current building open.*

A local resident launched a petition, gathering 1,159 signatures reflecting strong public commitment to maintaining Worle Library [Petition · Save Worle Library & Children Centre from closure - United Kingdom · Change.org.](#)

Are there any gaps in our evidence to support this Equality Impact Assessment? If so, what are the plans to gather this information?

An earlier iteration of this assessment acknowledged that the original small-scale survey, which was not designed to capture the views of children, resulted in gaps in understanding how young people engage with library services and how potential changes

might affect them. To address this, the Council implemented a comprehensive approach during the public consultation to engage children, young people, and those working with them. Senior leaders and governors from local schools were contacted directly via email at the outset, and additional outreach included informal discussions with parents and school staff during library visits and engagement events.

The Children's Services Engagement and Participation Team promoted the consultation through social media, with posts widely reshared by community groups, and conducted in-person school visits to support young people in completing questionnaires during VOICE sessions. Some schools also distributed consultation details through their own communication channels. At Pill Library and Children's Centre, engagement extended to childminders, supported by proactive communication and reinforced through library-based activities such as Rhymetime sessions. Further promotion occurred via social media platforms and through the Friends of Pill Library group, which undertook local outreach, including market stalls, social media posts, press coverage, and poster displays. The consultation was additionally publicised through the North Somerset 'Together' network, involving a broad range of community partners. These combined efforts demonstrate the Council's commitment to inclusive engagement and widespread awareness of the consultation opportunity.

In addition, the original survey did not include feedback from non-users of libraries. To address this, the consultation was promoted widely to maximise awareness and provide as many people as possible—including those who do not currently use libraries—with the opportunity to respond.

Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

Will the project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) on any of these groups?

	Impact Level				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
Protected or significant group	H	M	L	N	+	-	

Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	x		x	In the 2021 Census, 16.63% of people in the North Worle area, 19.84% of people in the South Worle area, 23.23% of people in the Mid-Worle area and 21.51% of people in the Kewstoke area identified themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act, having day-to-day activities limited a little or a lot. At Worle Library and Children's Centre 20% (40 out of 200) of library survey respondents identified as having a physical or mental health condition which impacts their day-to-day life. Therefore, closure of the library would have a high impact on people with disabilities. <u>Post consultation update</u> 58 (10.34%) respondents reported significant barriers to accessing alternative libraries due to disability, neurodivergence, health issues, fatigue, pain, poor eyesight, and mobility limitations. Many cannot walk long distances or drive, making local provision essential. Worle Library was described as a "lifeline" for those with deteriorating health or disabilities, offering a safe, accessible

				space for reading, social contact, and essential services. Several respondents identified as neurodiverse, including ADHD and autism, and emphasized the importance of quiet, calm spaces for study and reflection. Libraries provide a predictable, low-stimulation environment that helps manage stress and avoid overstimulation, which would be exacerbated by traveling further afield. Staff support was highlighted as critical for neurodiverse users who struggle with electronic systems or online processes. Dyslexic respondents noted that access to physical books and resources supports coping strategies and learning. Worle library was described as essential for wellbeing, providing structure, reducing isolation, and offering a safe, welcoming environment. Losing Worle Library would increase stress and isolation for those with ongoing

				mental health challenges and neurodivergent traits. Closure would disproportionately affect disabled and neurodiverse individuals by removing accessible, staffed spaces that meet their needs. Alternative libraries are not practical due to distance, transport limitations, and environmental overstimulation, creating significant barriers to inclusion.
People from different ethnic groups	x			96% of library survey respondents identified as White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. According to the North Somerset JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) 95.7% of the overall population is White. <u>Post consultation update</u> No respondents asked that race is considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment remains as low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.

Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	x		x	73% of library survey respondents were female and 5% of survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act due to pregnancy or maternity. In North Somerset, Census data indicates that 51.4% of the population is women (and 52.23% in Mid-Worle; 51.47% in Kewstoke; 50.82% in North Worle; 51.76% in South Worle), therefore women will be disproportionately affected by a closure at this branch. The closure of the library would result in the discontinuation of services such as Rhyme Time. Evidence suggests that participation in such sessions can have a positive impact on maternal mental health, offering opportunities for social connection, routine, and support during the early stages of parenthood. The removal of this provision may therefore disproportionately affect new mothers and primary carers, particularly those experiencing isolation or mental health challenges. <u>Post consultation update</u>

				3 responses in the consultation asked for sex or pregnancy or maternity to be considered as an equality issue. Comments noted that mothers are often the primary carers for young children and would be disproportionately affected by losing local library provision. Women rely on accessible facilities within walking distance to manage childcare responsibilities alongside other commitments. Concern was raised about Children's Centre services provided within Worle Library; essential early years support, including play sessions, story time, and opportunities for parents to connect. These services are critical for child development and parental wellbeing, and their loss would significantly impact families with young children. Worle Library offers practical amenities such as toilets for nappy changing and spaces for breastfeeding, which are not easily replicated elsewhere.

				These facilities make the library a safe and welcoming environment for parents and carers. Worle library provides opportunities for parents to meet, share experiences, and access advice in a neutral, inclusive setting. Story time and similar activities foster community connections and reduce isolation for carers. Closing Worle Library would remove a key support network for parents and carers, disproportionately affecting women and families with young children. Comments included that alternative sites may lack equivalent facilities or require travel that is impractical for those with prams or limited transport options.
People who are LGBTQ+	x		x	4% of library survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act, due to sexual orientation. The North Somerset Census average was 2.61%, which would indicate a higher impact on

				LGBTQ+ communities. This is higher usage rate is likely a result of community partner use of library space, rather than a reflection of the average library user. <u>Post consultation update</u> 2 respondents asked that sexual orientation is considered. No specific comments were included. This assessment has been changed from medium to low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People on a low income	x		x	While we don't hold data on the deprivation level of Worle library service users, we know that 17% of library survey respondents come to the library because they cannot afford internet access at home. Others may not be able to buy books or heat their homes and therefore the closure is assessed to have a negative impact on more deprived groups. In the 2021 Census an average of 52.09% of households in Worle had one or more

dimension deprivation. (52.1% Mid Worle, 48.55% North Worle, 55.63% South Worle)

Post consultation update

2 (0.36%) respondents mentioned concern for people on a low income and 8 (1.43%) expressed a concern for digital access in relation to finance. Comments highlighted that many residents do not own a car and rely on walking or limited public transport to access local services.

The assumption that people can “easily get to the Campus” does not reflect the reality for low-income households, where travel costs and time create significant barriers.

In addition to low income, the cost of digital access was mentioned and the lack of home internet or devices, making libraries essential for accessing online services, educational resources, and council information.

Closure of local libraries would disproportionately affect these individuals by removing free IT access and printing facilities.

				Closing Worle Library would widen inequalities for low-income households by increasing costs, reducing access to essential services, and limiting opportunities for education and community engagement.
People in particular age groups	x		x	Children and elderly are more likely to use the library and are therefore disproportionately impacted by the closure of this site. 27% of Worle library survey respondents indicated they were over 75 years of age. The closure of the library would have a notable impact on children and young people, particularly through the loss of Lego Club and Digilocal. These free, inclusive activities provide valuable opportunities for informal learning, creativity, and digital skill development outside of school. Digilocal supports digital literacy and introduces children to programming in a supportive environment, helping to bridge the digital divide. Lego

			Club encourages problem-solving, teamwork, and imaginative play, contributing to cognitive and social development. The removal of these services may disproportionately affect children from lower-income families who may not have access to similar resources at home, potentially widening educational and digital inequalities. <u>Post consultation update</u> 24 (4.28%) respondents asked for age (children and families and elderly) to be considered as an equality issue. Local libraries are essential for families with young children, providing access to books, story time sessions, and early learning activities that foster literacy and social development. Parents highlighted that libraries offer a safe, welcoming space where children can feel comfortable and included, particularly those who may struggle in other settings.

				Children under 16 without access to a car face significant barriers to reaching alternative libraries due to poor public transport, making local provision critical. Libraries support educational attainment by offering resources for homework and encouraging a love of reading, which is seen as "the gateway to education." Elderly residents rely on libraries for social contact, reducing isolation, and accessing information and council services. Libraries provide vital digital inclusion support for elderly who struggle with technology or cannot afford to replace failing devices. Clubs and informal interactions at libraries help maintain wellbeing and community engagement for older residents. Concerns were raised that unstaffed libraries would negatively impact elderly users who depend on staff assistance. Both age groups benefit from libraries as safe, inclusive spaces that offer free

				access to resources and human interaction. Closure of Worle library would disproportionately affect children and elderly by removing accessible services and increasing isolation. Libraries play a preventative role in supporting wellbeing and education, reducing long-term inequalities for these age groups.
People in particular faith groups	x			Only 1 respondent at Worle library indicated that their religion, belief (or none) needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 6% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> 1 respondent asked for religion to be considered in relation to equalities. Libraries were identified as one of the few remaining neutral, inclusive community spaces where people from different faiths,

				ethnic backgrounds, and cultures can meet and interact. This fosters understanding and social cohesion at a time of increasing community tensions. Removing such spaces risks reducing opportunities for positive interaction and shared experiences, which are vital for promoting equality and integration. Closing Worle Library would diminish a safe, accessible venue that supports interfaith and intercultural engagement, potentially exacerbating social division and reducing inclusivity.
People who are married or in a civil partnership		x		Only 2 respondents at Worle library indicated that being married or in a civil partnership needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 3% and therefore impacts are considered negligible. <u>Post consultation update</u> No respondents asked that being married or in a civil partnership is considered. No specific comments were included. This

				assessment remains as low in case those who are affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x		x	Library survey responses indicate that only 1% of library users identified as being a different gender to the one assigned at birth, with 3% preferring not to say. At Worle library, 8 respondents preferred not to say, and 5 respondents identified their gender as being different to the one assigned at birth and therefore Worle library has a higher number of users undergoing gender reassignment than at other library sites. <u>Post consultation update</u> No respondents selected gender reassignment to be considered in the consultation feedback as a protected characteristic. No specific comments were included. This assessment has changed from high to low in case those who are

				affected by the changes proposed have not yet processed the impact on them directly.
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:	x			We do not hold data for these groups; however, knowledge of the local community would indicate that these groups are not highly represented in this area. As part of the consultation process, we intend to gather more detailed data and better understand the potential impact on these groups—particularly unpaid carers—to ensure their needs and perspectives are fully considered. <u>Post consultation update</u> Carers stressed that time constraints and travel difficulties make local facilities vital for accessing health information and supporting dependents. Adults with low literacy: Worle library provides a venue for Read Easy, they play a critical role in supporting adults (currently 4 based at Worle) who are learning to read or improving literacy skills.

			These individuals often rely on local, accessible, and staffed libraries for guidance, resources, and a safe, non-judgmental environment. Environmental and Community Impact: Keeping local libraries open reduces unnecessary travel, supporting sustainability and lowering carbon emissions. Walkable access to libraries helps maintain community spirit and encourages local engagement. Mental Health and Wellbeing: Respondents noted that mental illnesses and stress make traveling further afield difficult, reinforcing the need for local, accessible spaces. Libraries provide a neutral, safe, and welcoming environment that promotes wellbeing and social inclusion. Perceived Inequity in Service Distribution: Comments expressed frustration that facilities are being removed from Worle while investment appears concentrated in

				Weston, which some described as “no longer safe or easy to wander around.” Opening Hours While respondents raised concerns about limited opening hours as a barrier for working people, it is important to note that extended (self-service) access has been available at Worle Library since 2018. This option allows registered users to access the library outside staffed hours, providing greater flexibility for those unable to visit during standard times. However, consultation feedback indicates that take-up of self-service access at Worle has been limited, suggesting that awareness or confidence in using the system could be improved.

Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other budget savings?

Yes

This library closure forms part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset and any mitigations implemented to reduce the equalities impacts of this closure may increase costs in other areas of the library and council services (for example outreach costs).

Section 4 – Options

What other options have been considered?

Do nothing. The Council has declared a financial emergency: this option is not feasible as transformation is required to achieve the £433k revenue savings target included in the Council's MTFP and helps ensure that we continue to deliver sustainable services with our communities.

Consider adopting either Option A or Option C, as presented in the consultation. These options were rejected in favour of option B for the reasons outlined in section 1 of the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

Section 5 – Action Plan – closure of Worle library

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	Promote the Home Library Service to people unable to access libraries independently. Develop and promote community-based library activities, developed according to the needs identified through the consultation. Explore possibility of using local community transport links to take	Emma Wellard / delegate	Summer 2026

	customers to The Campus / other libraries in Weston regularly for use. Increase awareness of Blue Badge parking bays outside The Campus and parking available at other libraries in Weston. Support use of and promotion of community transport schemes. Review seating close to the entrance at The Campus and undertake an accessibility audit of the Campus to identify other potential improvements. Offer guided library tours for first time visitors to the Campus. Provide online previews or similar resources for our libraries to support anyone who may find entering a new building daunting, helping to make alternative locations feel more familiar and accessible		
Women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	Expanding outreach services and partnering with Family Hubs to deliver	Emma Wellard / delegate	Summer 2026

	targeted maternity, pregnancy and early years events and activities. Signpost information on topics such as women's health and pregnancy and maternity services at the other Weston libraries. Increase the early years offer at The Campus library to support maternal mental health and opportunities to connect and connecting with Family Hubs based on site to extend the impact of this work. Signposting Worle customers to neighbouring libraries at the Campus, For All Healthy Living Centre and Weston.		
People who are LGBTQ+	Work with existing partnerships and networks to deliver targeted support to these groups to maintain inclusivity. This will include ensuring representation and visibility in outreach activities.	Emma Wellard	Summer 2026
People on a low income	Expanding outreach services and partnering with groups and centres	Emma Wellard	Summer 2026

	other agencies / partners to provide information and access to Council and digital services. Increase promotion of eResources to reduce the need to travel. Promote safe walking / cycle routes to the Campus and Weston libraries. Ensuring that support for accessing Council services continues to be provided via neighbouring libraries in Weston. Signposting Worle customers to neighbouring libraries at the Campus, For All Healthy Living Centre and Weston.		
People in particular age groups – children and elderly	Expanding outreach services in community locations, based on the needs identified through the consultation for example story times / rhymetimes. Signposting Worle customers to neighbouring libraries at the Campus,	Emma Wellard	Summer 2026

	For All Healthy Living Centre and Weston. Promote the Home Library Service to people unable to access libraries independently. Offer outreach services to local schools who previously visited Worle library. Code Club – investigate alternative locations for Digilocal to operate from.		
All groups	Invite community champions and local partners to a Campus walkthrough to identify quick wins e.g. signage, seating layout. Set up Welcome to the Campus short guided library tours for first time visitors for a time limited period to ease transition. Deliver targeted, accessible communications to Worle users, including clear transport and accessibility information. Share transport information clearly including public transport and active	Emma Wellard	Summer 2026

	travel options, improve wayfinding to Blue Badge and drop-off points and signpost eligible users to community transport. Investigate the feasibility of a pop-up presence in Worle for advice, membership, reservations and basic digital help. Develop and promote community-based activities that, while outside statutory provision, support engagement and access to resources. These activities, e.g. home library service, community Storytime, digital support, will be delivered in partnership with local organisations, charities, and community groups, and may be supported by volunteers to ensure sustainability and reach.		

If after planned actions you anticipate negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

Impacts of the reduction and removal of access to Council services for digitally excluded customers cannot be entirely mitigated by community partners (who may or may not wish to support this). This is due to the required levels of data protection and knowledge of council services and teams required to offer this support.

Whilst the Council will continue to deliver Library services in alternative ways when Worle Library closes, the wider benefits of accessing Library services through a physical building and the social connection this brings may be lost. This is likely to result in an increase in social isolation, loneliness, cohesion and deprivation in the local community.

Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with those effected?

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

Section 6 – Monitoring

What are the governance arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actions listed above and the actual impact on protected or significant groups?

A full plan will be put in place once the outcome of the consultation is known and a decision made on a way forward.

Section 7 – Publish the Assessment

How will you publish this Equality Impact Assessment?

A comprehensive version of the Equality Impact Assessment will be made available on a dedicated webpage. This will include downloadable documents and contact information for further inquiries or feedback.

Hard copies will be distributed to local libraries to ensure that individuals without internet access can review the materials.

These measures are intended to provide broad public access and encourage informed participation in the consultation process.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Yatton Library

1. The Project

Directorate:	Corporate Services
Service area:	Libraries
Lead Officer:	Emma Wellard
Date:	July 2025
Review date:	November 2025
Updated:	December 2025
Updated Post Recommendation Report:	January 2026

Description of the project:

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the feedback and findings from the recent Library Services Transformation public consultation, and the recommendations that have been developed for a way forward.

Following the analysis of need, implementing Option B (see below) has emerged as the recommended way forward. Implementing this option in full should deliver a sustainable library service in accordance with the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, within the reduced budget.

Option B balances savings requirements with equity of access by retaining Pill Library within the Council-run network due to high levels of local need; seeking a community-managed model for Winscombe (with closure as a fallback if no viable model emerges); implementing a network-wide reduction in staffed opening hours; closing Worle Library due to building condition issues with alternative access at The Campus (approx. 1.5 miles away) and additional outreach provided; and realising additional savings from central budgets including c.£30,000 reduction in the annual budget for new books and digital resources.

Summary of changes:

To meet these savings targets, the option agreed to go to public consultation in summer 2025 included a proposal to change the opening hours at Yatton library. The proposed change involved closing at 12:30 instead of 13:00 on Saturdays. This document is designed to assess the equalities impacts this will have on the local community, library service provision and staff.

Following the consultation on the proposal to reduce opening hours by closing 30 minutes earlier on Saturdays, and after reviewing stakeholder feedback alongside further analysis of footfall data, the recommendation regarding opening hours has been revised. Rather than reducing Saturday hours, it is recommended that Yatton Library opens at 10:00 on Tuesdays instead of 09:30. As well as responding to customer feedback, this adjustment also enhances clarity for customers by standardising the later opening time. Currently, libraries open later once a month for staff meetings, which requires separate communication. By adopting a consistent later opening on Tuesdays, the need for additional messaging is removed.

Post consultation update

This updated Equality Impact Assessment reflects the findings from the public consultation held between 31 July 2025 and 24 October 2025. The consultation engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community groups, and residents. Feedback was gathered through multiple channels, including 346 online responses (for Yatton) via eConsult, a community engagement event held in Yatton library, and additional input received via email. The findings have been used to refine the assessment of impacts on protected and significant groups.

The consultation received a significant response, with key themes and concerns emerging:

Libraries as Essential Community Resources: Yatton library is valued for far more than books—it provides a safe space, social interaction, and educational opportunities for all ages. It plays a critical role in child development, literacy, and fostering a love of reading.

Minimal Impact of reduction in opening hours: Many respondents noted that minor reductions in opening hours (e.g., 30 minutes) would have little personal impact, especially if extended access remains available. However, concerns were raised about reduced weekend staffed hours and the impact on young people who cannot use unstaffed libraries.

Strong Opposition to Closure of other libraries: concern was expressed about closing libraries, it is seen as highly detrimental, reducing access to learning, social contact, and essential services. Respondents described libraries as a lifeline for vulnerable groups and a cornerstone of community cohesion.

Importance of Staffed Hours: Staff support is essential for safety, IT assistance, and helping those with additional needs. Increased unstaffed hours could exclude users who feel unsafe or struggle with technology.

Protecting Core Services and Stock: Maintaining budgets for new books and digital services is considered critical to preserve the library's value. Respondents objected strongly to reductions in book acquisition, noting that libraries provide access to titles many cannot afford.

Impact on Vulnerable Groups: Libraries are vital for those without transport, older people seeking purposeful outings, and families who rely on free educational resources. Reducing access risks widening social inequality and creating a “false economy” by increasing isolation and reducing wellbeing.

While minor changes to opening hours may have limited immediate impact for many users, respondents expressed strong opposition to any significant service reductions, particularly cuts to book budgets, digital services, and staffed hours. Libraries are widely regarded as essential public services that provide safe, inclusive spaces for learning, social interaction, and digital access,

supporting wellbeing and community cohesion. Protecting core resources and staffed support was seen as critical to maintaining equality of access, especially for vulnerable groups and families with young children. Overall, the comments highlight that libraries are a cornerstone of education and social infrastructure, and any substantial reduction in services risks long-term harm to individuals and communities, creating a false economy of savings.

2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the changes proposed in this project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) for any of these groups?

Page 528

		Impact Level				Impact type	
Protected or significant group		H	M	L	N	+	-
Disabled people (Including the consideration of neurodiversity)				x			
People from different ethnic groups				x			
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)				x			
People who are LGBTQ+				x			
People on a low income				x			
People in particular age groups				x			

People in particular faith groups	x		
People who are married or in a civil partnership	x		
People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x		
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:	x		

3. Explanation of customer impact

The decision to reduce opening hours has been assessed as having a low impact on protected groups. This is because the change represents a minimal reduction in service hours, occurring at the end of the day when footfall data shows that usage is typically lower. Protected groups are unlikely to be disproportionately affected. Extended access, digital services and weekend opening hours, remain available to support continued inclusion and accessibility.

Please describe how you will communicate these changes to those impacted.

A report recommending a way forward will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2026. A full and detailed communication plan is in place to communicate the outcomes of the Decisions made to residents and stakeholders.

4. Staff equality impact summary

Are there any staffing implications for this proposal? Yes

Explanation of staff impact

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. The likely impact on staffing will not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is known. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow at that point which will affect the whole service. This uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

9. Cumulative equality impacts

Is this project linked to or likely to have an impact on any other service areas?

The options for Yatton library form part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset. While the impact at this library is minimal, not implementing the changes (reduction in opening hours) would result in a greater negative impact at other libraries.

6. Action Plan

Are there any further actions that should be taken because of this Equality Impact Assessment?

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Reduced staffed hours	To help reduce the impact of opening at 10:00 on a Tuesday instead of 09:30, we propose extending and promoting self-service opening hours. This would allow continued access to key library resources such as book borrowing, computer use, and study spaces outside of staffed hours. While this does not fully replace the benefits of staffed services and community activities, it may help maintain a level of accessibility—particularly for those who rely on the library outside of standard working hours.	Emma Wellard	March 2026

7. Review and Sign Off

Service Manager Review

This updated impact assessment reflects the findings from the public consultation and the revised decision on opening hours. The initial assessment was based on the potential changes outlined in the consultation document; this version incorporates feedback received and the outcome of the consultation process.

Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed?

No

Service Manager:

Emma Wellard

Date:

12 January 2026

Future of Library Services in North Somerset

Consultation Summary Report

January 2026

Author: North Somerset Council



Foreword

This report marks an important milestone in our ongoing commitment to engage communities in shaping future library services in North Somerset.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my thanks to the thousands of residents and stakeholders who took the time to contribute to this consultation. Your thoughtful responses and willingness to share your perspectives are greatly appreciated. The voices of our community are central to shaping the decisions we make, and your engagement ensures that our services reflect the needs and aspirations of our residents. A particular highlight of this consultation has been the outstanding level of engagement from young people, with over 500 children sharing their views. This is a powerful testament to the value that our younger residents place on library services and a positive reflection of our community's future.

The findings from this consultation will play a pivotal role in guiding our next steps and shaping library services. We will publish the decisions on our website and encourage residents and stakeholders to stay involved as our services develop.

My thanks also go to the team of people who helped promote the consultation and engaged with so many of you and to those who have undertaken the analysis. I know that they have taken that responsibility seriously to ensure that this report is a fair reflection of the many views shared with us and of the impacts that you told us the options for change would have.

Thank you once again for your contributions and ongoing support.



Mandy Bishop
Chief Executive, North Somerset Council

Contents

Foreword	2
Contents	3
Figures and tables	4
Executive summary	6
Glossary of terms	11
1. Introduction	15
2. Methodology	17
3. Summary of responses	21
4. Respondents	24
5. How people use library services	27
6. Views on the proposals	36
7. Impact of the proposals	43
8. Reducing impacts, exploring alternative models, and income generation ideas	47
9. Community involvement	50
10. Equalities monitoring	51
11. Site-specific and drop-in session feedback	58
12. Town and parish council and ward member feedback	64
13. Email and letter responses	67
14. Children's survey results	72
Future of Library Services in North Somerset – Consultation Summary Report	79
Annex 1. Information on the three proposed options for change	80
Annex 2. Promotion and engagement activities	90
Annex 3. Consultation results (Question 4 breakdown)	92
Annex 4. Consultation questions (Q1-Q19)	93
Annex 5. Town and parish council and ward member responses	97
Annex 6. Children's responses	102

Figures and tables

Figures

Figure 1: Breakdown of responses to the libraries consultation by submission type	21
Figure 2: Proportion of responses by respondent type	24
Figure 3: Geographic distribution of responses (paper and online submissions only)	25
Figure 4: Use of physical library branches (multiple responses allowed)	27
Figure 5: Use of online library services	28
Figure 6: Frequency of library use	29
Figure 7: Modes of engagement with library services	30
Figure 8: Levels of agreement with each option	38
Figure 9: Reported impacts of proposed library changes	43

Tables

Table 1: Overview of three proposed options for change	6
Table 2: Glossary of terms	11
Table 3: Estimated attendance at public drop-in sessions	21
Table 4: Interest in supporting a community-managed library	50
Table 5: Age profile of respondents	51
Table 6: Sex profile of respondents	52
Table 7: Ethnicity profile of respondents	52
Table 8: Health profile of respondents	53
Table 9: Language profile of respondents	54
Table 10: Ward location of respondents	54
Table 11: Age of respondents	73
Table 12: Libraries visited by respondents	73
Table 13: Frequency of library visits	74
Table 14: Timing of library visits	75
Table 15: Importance of library services	76
Table 16: Impact of nearest library closing	76
Table 17: Ability to visit another library	77
Table 18: Overview of changes for Options A, B and C	80

Table 19: Option A – Proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations	82
Table 20: Option B – Proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations	85
Table 21: Option C – Proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations	87
Table 22: Consultations results for Question 4 (overall views on Options A, B and C)	92
Table 23: Consultation questions	93



Executive summary

North Somerset Council carried out a 12-week public consultation between 31 July and 24 October 2025 on proposals to deliver £433,000 of savings within the library service as part of the council’s wider financial challenge. The consultation sought views on three options for change, including possible site closures, reductions in staffed hours, and alternative delivery models. It was open to anyone with an interest in the future of the library service.

A total of **4,912** responses were received to the consultation, including responses to a dedicated children’s survey. Further views were also shared through drop-in sessions and email correspondence.

Consulted options for change

A summary of the three consulted options is set out in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Overview of three proposed options for change

Option A

Community library management opportunities

Local communities were offered the opportunity to manage libraries with the lowest usage in Winscombe and Pill, with the potential to remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solutions were identified, Winscombe and Pill libraries would be subject to closure.

Worle Library and Children’s Centre was identified as being at risk of closure unless a community-led or partner-led solution could be secured, due to the significant costs required for building repairs and ongoing maintenance.

Proposed service changes

- A reduction in opening hours was proposed across the remaining council-operated libraries.
- Where libraries closed, alternative methods of providing access to library services would be implemented to meet local needs.
- Reductions to central budgets were planned, including reducing spending on new books and digital resources by c£20k.
- An increase in income generation activities was proposed to support service sustainability.

Option B

Community library management opportunities

Local communities were offered the opportunity to manage Winscombe Library, with the potential to remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solutions were identified, Winscombe Library would be subject to closure.

Worle Library and Children's Centre was identified as being at risk of closure unless a community-led or partner-led solution could be secured, due to the significant costs required for building repairs and ongoing maintenance.

Proposed service changes

- A reduction in opening hours was proposed across the remaining council-operated libraries, including a full day closure at the For All Healthy Living Centre Library week.
- Where libraries closed, alternative methods of providing access to library services would be implemented to meet local needs.
- Reductions to central budgets were planned, including reducing spending on new books and digital resources by c£30k.
- An increase in income generation activities was proposed to support service sustainability.

Option C

Community library management opportunities

Local communities were offered the opportunity to manage Pill Library, with the potential to remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solutions were identified, Pill Library would be subject to closure.

Worle Library and Children's Centre was identified as being at risk of closure unless a community-led or partner-led solution could be secured, due to the significant costs required for building repairs and ongoing maintenance.

Proposed service changes

- A reduction in opening hours was proposed across the remaining council-operated libraries, including a full day closure at the For All Healthy Living Centre Library each week.
- Where libraries closed, alternative methods of providing access to library services would be implemented to meet local needs.
- Reductions to central budgets were planned, including spending on new books and digital resources.

- An increase in income generation activities was proposed to support service sustainability.

Respondents were also invited to suggest alternative ideas and solutions to help sustain services.

Headline findings

Views on the proposals

- Option B received the highest level of agreement (48.0% agreed, 27.0% neither agreed nor disagreed, 25.0% disagreed), followed by Option A (43% agreed, 23.0% neutral, 34.0% disagreed) and Option C (41.0% agreed, 27.0% neutral, 32.0% disagreed).
- None of the options achieved majority support, and around 1,000 or a fifth of respondents did not provide a response to whether they agreed or disagreed with any of the options.
- Free-text comments focused more on the overall proposals than on specific options, with strong concern about closures and reduced staffed hours.
- Only a very small minority supported closures; others favoured reduced hours or suggested alternative savings and income generation ideas.
- For Pill, respondents highlighted the impact that closure would have on low-income families, who rely on having a free, local library within easy reach. Many also stressed that Pill Library is a well-used community space, and its loss would remove an important place for children, families, and residents to meet, learn, and access support.
- For Winscombe and Worle, respondents were concerned about the possibility of their local library closing and the barriers this would create. People commonly highlighted the difficulty of travelling to alternative libraries, limited public transport options, and the impact on older residents, families, and those who rely on having a library within easy reach.

How people use libraries

- Most respondents (92.7%) were North Somerset residents, with high participation from Pill, Winscombe, Clevedon, Portishead, and parts of Weston-super-Mare.
- Respondents were highly engaged users: nearly three-quarters (74.7%) visit weekly or monthly.
- Libraries were described as supporting people throughout their lives – from early reading and homework support to study space, digital access, and social connection.
- Most visits take place during staffed hours (83.1%), and many respondents praised the support and welcome provided by library staff.

Children's survey findings

Children emphasised the importance of free book borrowing (93.8%), and 89.6% said closures would make it harder for them to borrow books. Many described libraries as safe, enjoyable places to read, learn, and spend time. Most simply said they did not want their library to close, often explaining that they would feel sad and that they enjoy going to the library.

Perceived impacts

Personal impact was mixed, but community impact was a dominant theme. Respondents expressed strong concern about potential closures. Commonly cited impacts included:

- loss of space for clubs, groups, and regular activities (reading groups, ESOL cafés, coding clubs, social meet-ups)
- reduced access to books, study space, and digital resources, particularly affecting those without alternatives at home
- negative effects on children's literacy, confidence, and participation in activities such as the Summer Reading Challenge
- impacts on digital inclusion, especially for residents reliant on library computers and support
- increased travel time and cost, particularly for rural residents and those without private transport
- loss of safe, welcoming spaces used by vulnerable groups, including older people and those seeking social connection

Comments frequently highlighted the impact on children, emphasising early literacy, confidence, and the importance of free access to books and activities – especially for families without resources at home. Many also spoke about the legacy value of libraries, used across generations and expected to benefit future ones.

Community involvement and income generation

- While respondents recognised the council's financial pressures, most opposed closures. They encouraged the council to prioritise reduced staffed hours, extended access, and income-generation options before considering the withdrawal of local provision.
- The most commonly suggested income-generation idea was hiring out space within library buildings. Other typical suggestions included advertising, partnerships with local organisations, and modest charges for certain services.
- Interest in community-managed libraries was mixed. While a small minority (13.0%) said they would consider supporting such a model, most preferred libraries to remain council-run. Comments typically focused on whether a community-managed

approach could be maintained in the long term, the pressure it would place on volunteers, and the risk of unequal provision if some communities were better placed than others to take on this responsibility.

Equalities and consultation limitations

Equalities monitoring showed over-representation of older residents and under-representation of younger residents and minority ethnic groups. As with all voluntary consultations, findings reflect the views of those who chose to participate. Geographic variation in engagement and gaps in demographic data should be considered when interpreting the results.



Glossary of terms

Table 2: Glossary of terms

Active user definition

Active users are those library members who have borrowed a book, used a library computer, or had any other usage of library services recorded on the management system in the last 12 months.

BorrowBox

A free to access digital service for borrowing eBooks, newspapers, magazines and audiobooks online. Accessible via app or website. Paid for by subscription through the LibrariesWest Consortium.

See also: [LibrariesWest partnership and borrowing](#).

Cabinet

The group of elected councillors responsible for making key service and budget decisions.

Children's survey

A tailored questionnaire designed to capture the views of younger participants during the consultation.

Community Hub

Libraries used as multi-purpose spaces that support social interaction, learning, wellbeing, and access to services. Sometimes located alongside other services.

Community-managed library

A library run mainly by volunteers or local organisations, with varying levels of council support.

Consultation

A formal process where the council seeks public views before making decisions.

Conversation Cafe

Informal sessions held in libraries to help people practise English, build confidence, and connect with others. See also: [ESOL](#).

Council-run library

A library managed and funded directly by North Somerset Council, with professional staff and central service support.

Digital exclusion

When people lack access to digital services, internet, or digital skills. Libraries help address this through free Wi-Fi, computer access, and staff support.

e-Consult

North Somerset Council's online consultation platform, through which individuals could submit formal responses.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An assessment of how proposed changes may affect different groups, especially those protected under the Equality Act 2010.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Classes and support for people learning English.

Extended Access

A service that allows registered library members to access certain libraries outside of staffed hours using a secure entry system.

Full Council

The meeting of all elected councillors where final decisions are made.

Home Library Service

A volunteer delivered service that delivers books and other materials to residents who are unable to visit a library independently, due to disability, illness, or caring responsibilities.

Hoopla

A cloud-based digital library service that some libraries outside of the LibrariesWest Consortium offer to their members, allowing instant streaming and borrowing of digital content such as movies, TV shows, music, and audiobooks via participating public libraries. North Somerset Libraries do not subscribe to this service.

Libby

A free-to-use web and mobile app that allows users to borrow ebooks, audiobooks, and other digital materials from public libraries, paid for by subscription. This service was previously provided by North Somerset Libraries but is now provided through BorrowBox. See also: [BorrowBox](#)

LibrariesWest partnership and borrowing

A partnership of seven library services in the South West of England (Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, Dorset, North Somerset, Poole, Somerset, South Gloucestershire). Membership gives access to resources across the whole area. See also: [BorrowBox](#).

Local Studies/Archive Services

Collections and resources held by libraries that document the history, geography, and culture of the local area. Most resources are accessed through the North Somerset Studies Library in Weston-super-Mare.

Mobile Library

A travelling library service that visits communities lacking a static library on a regular schedule, providing access to books and other resources.

North Somerset Studies

A special collection dedicated to local history, heritage, maps, newspapers, and archives for the North Somerset area. See also: [Local studies/archive services](#)

Option A/B/C

The specific proposals models presented in the consultation. Each option is explained in the main report.

Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

An Act of Parliament that imposes a statutory duty on local authorities in England and Wales to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” public library service.

Public Sector Equality Duty

The duty under the Equality Act 2010 requiring councils to consider how services meet the needs of different groups.

Reservation service

The ability to request specific books (including from other libraries in the network) for collection at a chosen branch.

Rhyme Time/Story Time

Regular library sessions for pre-school children and their parents/carers that include songs, rhymes, and storytelling to support early literacy.

Section 106 (S106) contributions

Funding provided by developers under planning agreements, which can be used to support community facilities such as libraries.

Stakeholder

Any individual, group, or organisation with an interest in the future of library services.

Summer Reading Challenge

A national initiative encouraging children to read during the summer holidays, often supported by local libraries through themed activities and rewards.

Universal Library Offers

A framework – developed with library leaders, frontline staff, and users and championed by **Libraries Connected** – to define the four core service areas essential to high-quality public libraries

- Reading
- Digital and information
- Culture and creativity
- Health and wellbeing



1. Introduction

This report summarises the responses to North Somerset Council's public consultation on the future of its library services, which ran from 31 July 2025 to 24 October 2025.

1.1. Options for change

Respondents were invited to comment on three proposed options for delivering the required savings, summarised below:

- **Option A** involved the potential closure of up to three libraries – Pill, Winscombe, and Worle – unless community groups stepped in to manage these sites. It also proposed a range of additional savings, including reductions in central budgets (including saving c£20k on the new books and digital resources budget) and reduced opening hours across the remaining council-run libraries. Increased income generation activity was also proposed.
- **Option B** proposed the potential closure of Winscombe and Worle Libraries, unless community groups stepped in to manage or support them. It also required c£30k savings from the books and digital resources budget, together with a reduction in opening hours at all libraries, including a full day closure per week at the For All Healthy Living Centre Library. Increased income generation activity was also proposed.
- **Option C** proposed the potential closure of Pill and Worle Libraries, unless community groups stepped in to manage or support them. It also required c£30k savings from the books and digital resources budget, together with a reduction in opening hours at all libraries, including a full day closure per week at the For All Healthy Living Centre Library. Increased income generation activity was also proposed.

Respondents were also encouraged to suggest alternative ideas and solutions to help sustain services. A full summary of each option is provided in [annex 1](#).

1.2. North Somerset's responsibility to deliver library services

North Somerset Council has a legal duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964¹ to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service for everyone who lives, works or studies in the area. We do this through a network of 11 static libraries located in towns and villages across the district, 10 of which are run by the Council and the other, Congresbury, a community-managed library. The council must also meet the

¹ Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, c.75.

Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75/contents>

public sector equality duty in the Equality Act 2010², ensuring services reflect the needs of different communities.

Nationally libraries deliver across four ‘Universal Library Offers: reading, digital and information, culture and creativity and health and wellbeing; helping build a consistent library service across the country whilst being flexible enough to respond to the needs of local communities:³.

1.3. Consultation purpose

North Somerset Council must save £44 million over the next three years (2026-2028) across all services. As part of this, the library service has been asked to deliver £433,000 in savings, equivalent to just under 20% of the 2025/26 library budget.

When material changes to services are proposed, the council has a statutory duty to consult. Beyond this requirement, the council recognises the importance of listening to residents, community groups and other stakeholders. Libraries are a highly valued part of local life, and it is right that communities have the opportunity to share their views and suggest alternative ideas before decisions are made.

1.4. Public engagement and community response

This consultation generated broad public engagement. Libraries are a valued community resource, and proposals for change often generate strong feelings. For many residents, libraries represent access to resources, opportunities, and community connection.

Town and parish councils, community groups, and political representatives all took part, alongside many individual residents. The council has taken care to reflect the feedback received. Responses were wide-ranging, reflecting the different personal circumstances and priorities of those who contributed. The council would like to thank everyone who shared their views. This input will be helpful as elected members consider the path forward and continue to engage with communities where appropriate.

1.5. Purpose of this report

This report does not set out decisions or recommendations. Its sole purpose is to summarise the responses received during the consultation, so that decision-makers have a clear understanding of the views expressed and are able to make decisions informed by community opinion and feedback.

² Equality Act 2010, c.15.

Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

³ Libraries Connected, Universal Library Offers. Available at:

<https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/projects/universal-library-offers>

2. Methodology

This section sets out how the consultation was conducted, how responses were gathered, and how the data was analysed.

2.1. Consultation process

The consultation ran for 12 weeks (31 July-24 October 2025) and was open to all. Responses were gathered through:

- **Online submissions via eConsult** (the council's online engagement platform)
- **Paper questionnaires** available in libraries or by post
- **Email and postal correspondence** from individuals and organisations
- **Public drop-in events** held at libraries and community venues
- **Children's survey** designed specifically for younger participants

2.2. Promotion and engagement

The consultation was promoted widely to maximise reach and accessibility. Activity included:

- **Online channels** such as the council website, social media, and email newsletters
- **Offline channels** including posters, flyers, and local press coverage
- **Targeted communications** to key stakeholders (for example, town and parish councils, community groups)
- **Outreach** through equalities networks and children's services to support diverse participation

Efforts were made to ensure awareness extended across North Somerset, with tailored outreach to engage diverse audiences. A full list of promotional activities is provided in [annex 2](#).

2.3. Consultation questions and responses

The questionnaire contained 19 questions (see [annex 4](#) for a full list), combining:

- **Closed questions** (set options such as “yes” or “no”) to provide measurable patterns
- **Open questions** (free-text responses) to capture richer qualitative insights

A total of **4,403 consultation responses** were received via paper and online submissions. All paper responses were manually entered into the online system by library staff. Of these:

- **92.7% (4,083 respondents)** identified as North Somerset residents
- **2.5%** were individuals outside the area
- The remainder included council staff, library volunteers, town and parish council representatives, and a small number of business or organisational representatives

Based on Census 2021 data showing a population of approximately **216,700** in North Somerset⁴, this represents a response rate of around **2.0% of residents**. Including additional feedback from children's surveys, informal conversations at drop-in events, overall participation is estimated at around 5,000 individuals.

2.4. Data analysis

A mixed-methods approach was used:

- **Quantitative analysis:** Closed questions (set options such as “yes” or “no”) were summarised to identify overall trends and levels of agreement and disagreement.
- **Qualitative analysis:** All written comments were carefully read and “coded”, meaning each response was categorised according to the theme(s) it related to. Coding grouped similar points together and highlighted the main views across thousands of comments and was carried out manually by council officers; no automated or Artificial Intelligence tools were used.

Examples of coding:

- “I rely on the library computers because I don’t have internet at home” = **Digital Access**
- “The children’s area is too small and noisy” = **Facilities for Families and Young People**

By applying these codes consistently, recurring themes such as access, facilities, the community role of libraries and inclusion were identified. To ensure fairness and reliability, more than one council officer checked the coding and reviewed the process. Direct quotations are included throughout the report to illustrate these themes and reflect respondents’ views in their own words.

⁴ Based on 2021 Census data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), *Census 2021: Population and household estimates, North Somerset*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

2.5. Use of qualitative language in reporting

This report uses terms like “many,” “some,” “a few,” and “several” to describe the feedback we received. Much of the consultation was shared through opentext comments, emails, letters, and conversations at drop-in sessions, so it isn’t possible to count these views precisely without losing important detail. Using qualitative terms is a fair and balanced way to reflect what people told us.

Consultation responses are also self-selecting, meaning they don’t represent a random sample of all residents. Using qualitative terms helps avoid overstating how common a particular view is and instead shows the relative strength of the themes within the feedback we received.

2.6. Limitations

As with all public consultations, the findings should be interpreted with care.

- **Voluntary participation** – Responses may reflect the views of those with stronger opinions or particular interest in library services.
- **Geographic variation** – Response rates varied by area; some communities are more heavily represented than others.
- **Local familiarity** – Respondents were often most familiar with their own local library, which may influence views on proposals affecting other sites.
- **Demographic data gaps** – Not all respondents completed demographic questions, limiting assessment of how well respondents represent the whole population of North Somerset.
- **Snapshot in time** – Views reflect the 12-week consultation period and may not account for opinions that have developed or changed since the consultation ended.
- **Separate children’s survey** – Children provided feedback through a simplified survey. While some questions mirrored those asked of adults, others were tailored to younger participants, meaning their responses are only partly comparable with adult submissions.

These limitations do not invalidate the findings but should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

2.7. Next steps

The findings from this consultation will be presented to Cabinet, the group of elected councillors responsible for key service and budget decisions. The feedback will inform their discussions on the future of library services and options for delivering the required savings. Cabinet may also decide that further engagement is needed before final decisions are made. The report of recommendations will also go to Full Council in February 2026

2.8. Timeline of next steps

The timeline below outlines the remaining stages in the decision-making process following this consultation.

- **Analysis and reporting:** November-December 2025
- **Cabinet consideration:** 11 February 2026
- **Full Council decision:** 17 February 2026
- **Ongoing engagement:** Spring 2026 onwards



3. Summary of responses

This section summarises the different ways people took part in the consultation and the range of feedback received.

3.1. Overall participation

A total of **4,912 responses** were received to the consultation.

Figure 1: Breakdown of responses to the libraries consultation by submission type

Total responses – 4,912		
e-Consult and paper – 4,403	Children’s survey – 500	Email and letters – 9

3.2. Public drop-in sessions⁵

To complement the formal consultation, public drop-in sessions were held across North Somerset, giving residents the chance to engage directly with council officers. Around **186 individuals** attended these sessions, held at libraries and community venues.

Attendance varied by location, with some sessions attracting fewer than five participants, while others, such as those in Winscombe and Pill, saw attendance exceeding 30 individuals. As sessions were open and informal, attendance figures are approximate based on staff observations. This approach prioritised accessibility and ease of participation, though it limits the ability to report exact numbers. Attendance figures are summarised in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Estimated attendance at public drop-in sessions

Location	Date	Venue	Approximate attendance
Nailsea	Saturday 30 August	Nailsea Library	6
Winscombe	Tuesday 2 September	Winscombe Community Centre	40
Worle	Tuesday 9 September	Worle Library	26
Yatton	Thursday 11 September	Yatton Library	0
Clevedon	Monday 15 September	Clevedon Library	8
Total			186

⁵ **Note:** This section sets out participation levels. A fuller summary of the results from the children’s survey and the public drop-in sessions is provided later in the report.

Location	Date	Venue	Approximate attendance
Pill	Wednesday 17 September	Pill Library and Children's Centre	30
Clevedon	Tuesday 30 September	Clevedon Library	6
For All Healthy Living Centre	Thursday 2 October	Healthy Living Centre	6
Nailsea	Tuesday 7 October	Nailsea Library	1
The Campus	Wednesday 8 October	The Campus	1
Portishead	Saturday 11 October	Portishead Library	8
Weston-super-Mare	Wednesday 15 October	Weston Library	13
Pill	Monday 20 October	Pill Library	34
Worle	Tuesday 21 October	Worle Library	7
Total			186

Attendance figures are approximate and based on staff observations at open sessions.

Drop-in session feedback is included within the site-specific feedback in [Section 11](#).

3.3. Overview of town and parish council and ward member feedback

Responses were also received from town and parish councils and from North Somerset ward members. The majority of contributions from town and parish councils and ward members were submitted through the main consultation questionnaire, with a smaller number received via email and letter.

In some cases, councillors responded in a personal capacity, while others submitted formal statements on behalf of their residents.

It should be noted that:

- **Some councils submitted multiple responses** – for example, several separate submissions were made in relation to Pill, reflecting the strength of local concern.
- **Public statements were also issued** by certain councils or ward members, adding to the formal record of views.
- **Positions may have evolved after the consultation period**, as discussions have continued. This report summarises only the feedback provided during the consultation period itself.

Feedback from Town and Parish Councils and Ward Members is set out in [Sections 12](#) and [13](#), reflecting both questionnaire responses and additional submissions received via email.

3.4. Children's survey

A dedicated children's survey ran alongside the main consultation. It was available online via SmartSurvey and in paper form across all library branches. Children either completed the survey independently or with the support of others, for example a parent or carer. In total, 500 responses were received. The eight question survey was tailored to be accessible to younger participants, with some questions mirroring those in the main questionnaire and others designed specifically for children.

Findings from the children's survey are presented in [Section 14](#).



4. Respondents

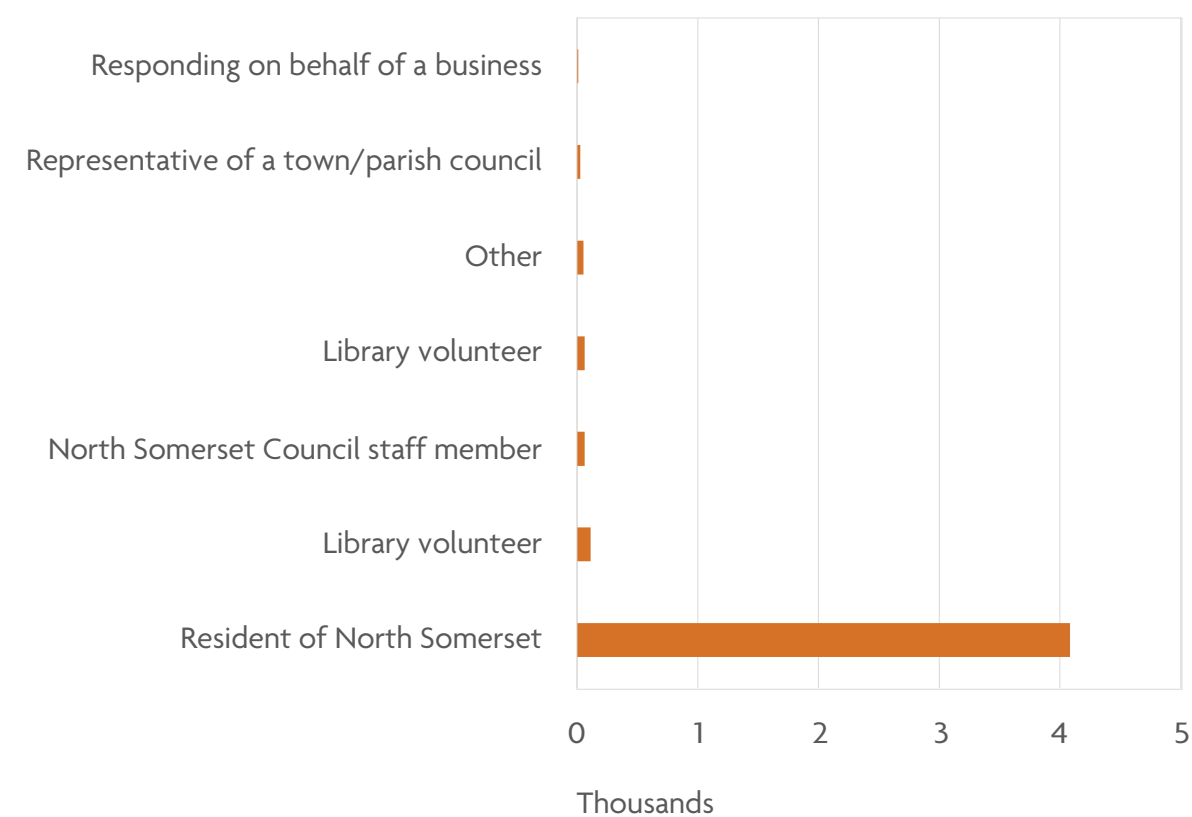
This section summarises who took part in the consultation and the characteristics of respondents who completed the main questionnaire.

4.1. Respondent type

This section reports on the **4,403 responses** submitted via paper and online questionnaires, which together form the main consultation dataset. Paper copies were manually entered into the online system by library staff. Other forms of feedback – including the children’s survey, public drop-in sessions, and submissions received by letter or email – are presented separately in the report, as they did not follow the same structured questionnaire format.

The majority of responses came from individuals with a direct connection to the area: **92.7% identified as residents of North Somerset**. While residents formed the overwhelming majority, additional contributions were received from council staff, library volunteers, town and parish councils, ward members and local businesses. Although smaller in number, these groups provide important perspectives.

Figure 2: Proportion of responses by respondent type



Respondent type	Count
Resident of North Somerset	4,083
Library volunteer	112

Respondent type	Count
North Somerset Council staff member	62
Library volunteer	61
Other	52
Representative of a town/parish council	25
Responding on behalf of a business	8

4.2. Geographic distribution of responses

Figure 3: Geographic distribution of responses (paper and online submissions only)

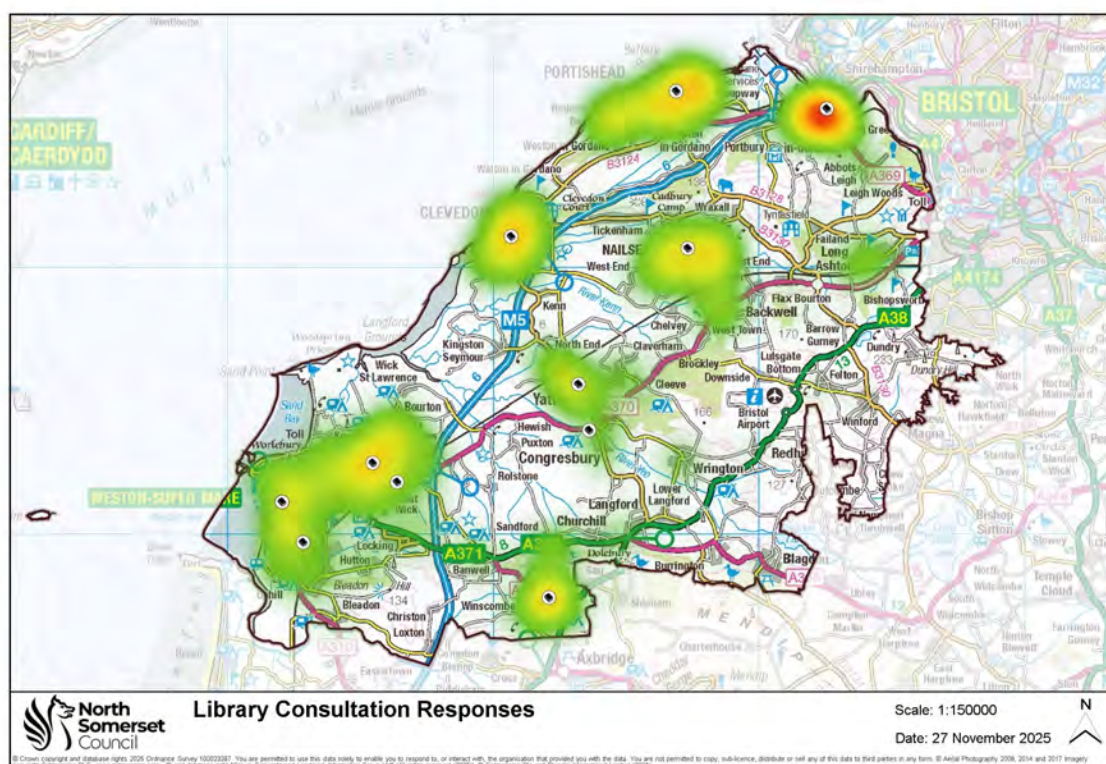


Figure 3 presents a heatmap showing the geographic distribution of responses, based on postcode data provided by respondents. Areas of deeper colour intensity indicate higher concentrations of responses, while lighter zones reflect lower levels of engagement. Black dots mark the location of existing library branches, allowing comparison between response volumes and service coverage.

The map reveals strong engagement from some wards in Weston-super-Mare, Portishead, Clevedon, Nailsea, Yatton, Pill and Winscombe. Other areas such as Worle and Gordano Valley wards also show clear engagement.

This pattern indicates that response levels were not solely driven by population size, but also by the perceived impact of the consultation on local services. Pill stands out in particular, with a notably high response rate.

The map also shows responses from communities where usage of the Mobile Library is high, for example Long Ashton and Wrington.

While the heatmap provides valuable insight into geographic engagement, it is important to note certain limitations. Areas with higher population density or greater digital access may naturally generate more responses. Conversely, lower engagement in some rural areas may reflect barriers to participation rather than a lack of interest. These factors should be considered when interpreting the data.

The heatmap highlights both the breadth of public interest in the future of North Somerset's library services – from larger towns to smaller villages, and from communities with active branches to those without. These patterns provide useful context when interpreting the findings presented in later sections of the report.



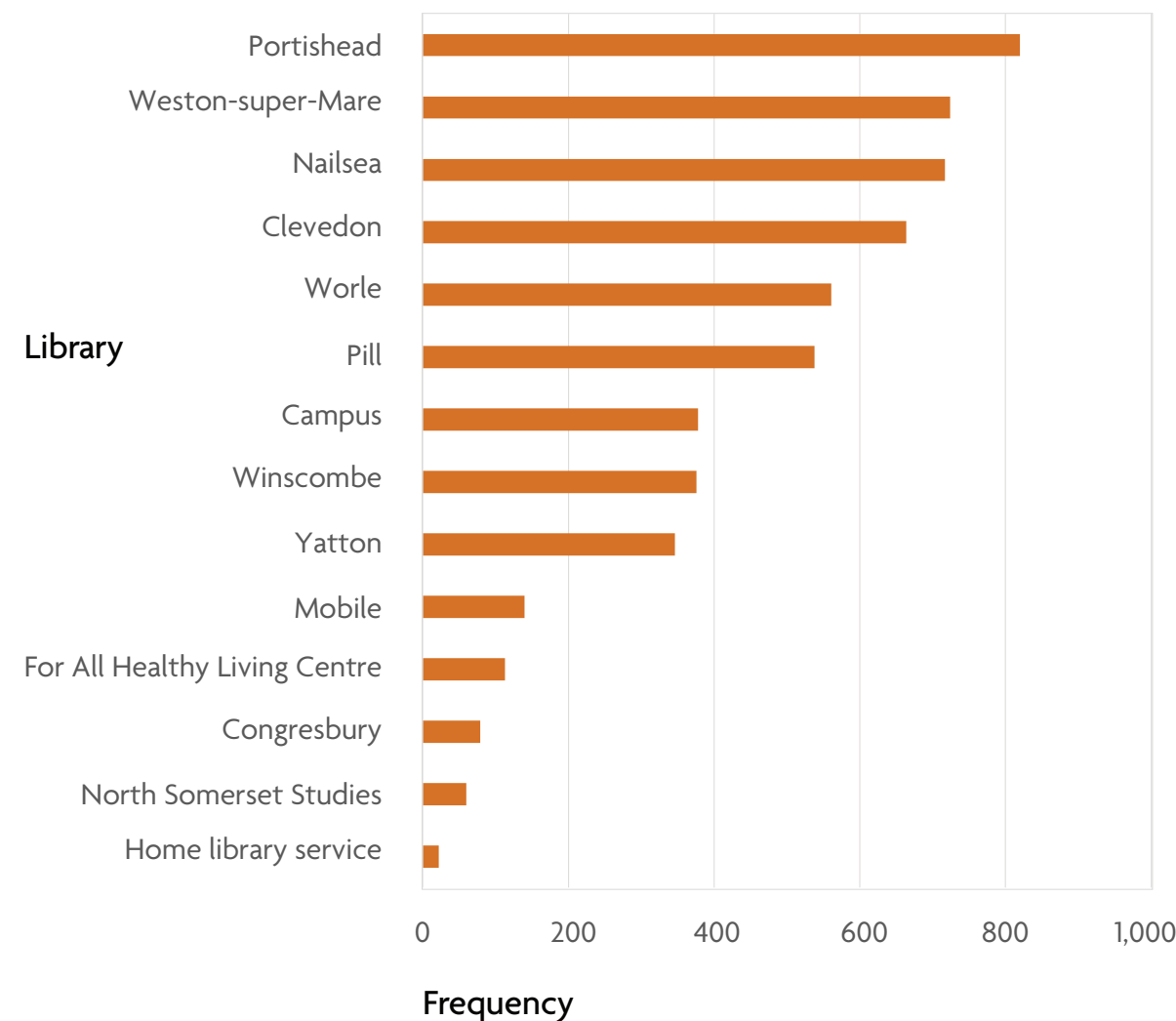
5. How people use library services

This section summarises how respondents currently use North Somerset’s library services, including physical branches, online services, and wider engagement activities.

5.1. Current uses of library services

Figure 4 summarises which physical library branches respondents reported using.

Figure 4: Use of physical library branches (multiple responses allowed)



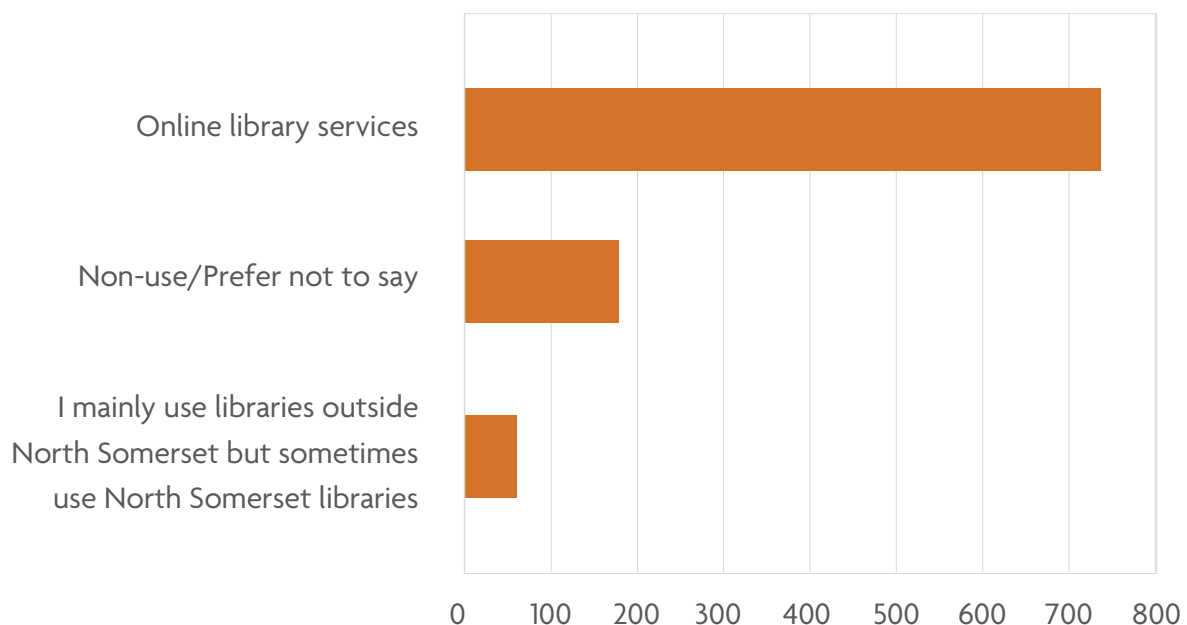
Place	Count
Home library service	22
North Somerset Studies	60
Congresbury	79
For All Healthy Living Centre	113
Mobile	140
Yatton	346

Place	Count
Winscombe	376
Campus	378
Pill	538
Worle	561
Clevedon	664
Nailsea	717
Weston-super-Mare	724
Portishead	820

Portishead Library received the highest number of selections, followed by Weston-super-Mare, Nailsea, and Clevedon. By comparison, Congresbury, North Somerset Studies, and the Home Library Service were selected less frequently.

Online library services were also widely used, highlighting the role of digital provision as an integral part of the overall library offer. A smaller group of respondents indicated limited or no current use of North Somerset library services, with some noting that they primarily access libraries outside the authority area.

Figure 5: Use of online library services

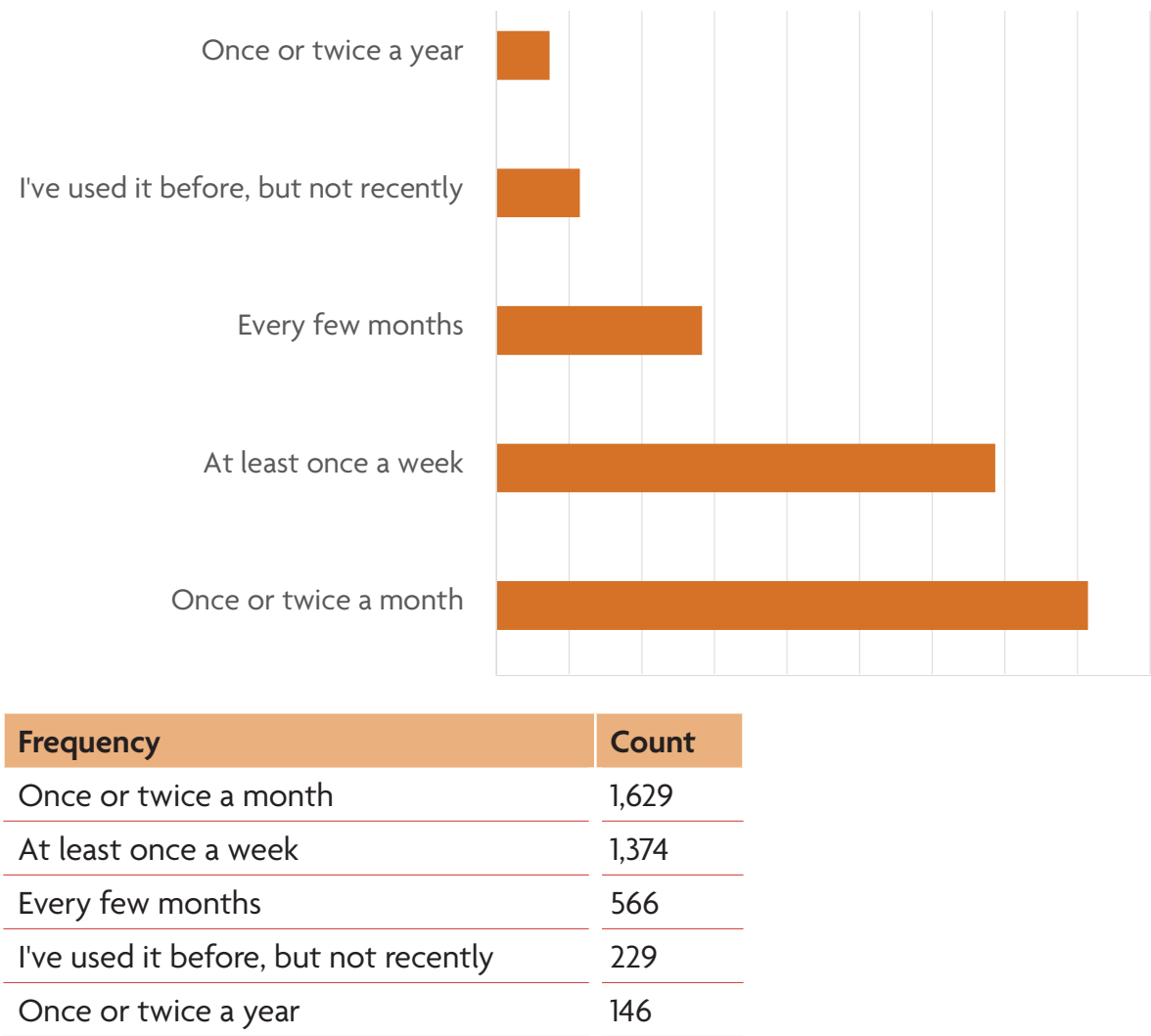


Place	Count
I mainly use libraries outside North Somerset but sometimes use North Somerset libraries	60
Non-use/Prefer not to say	179
Online library services	737

5.2. How frequently respondents use library services

Respondents were asked how frequently they use library services. **Figure 6** shows a breakdown of responses. Most respondents are active library users, with most (74.7%) using services on a weekly or monthly basis.

Figure 6: Frequency of library use



For some, libraries are an essential part of daily life. For instance, one respondent recognised this, stating: *“I visit the library every day it is open – it is a life saver for me, the only way for me to access a computer as I don’t have one at home.”*

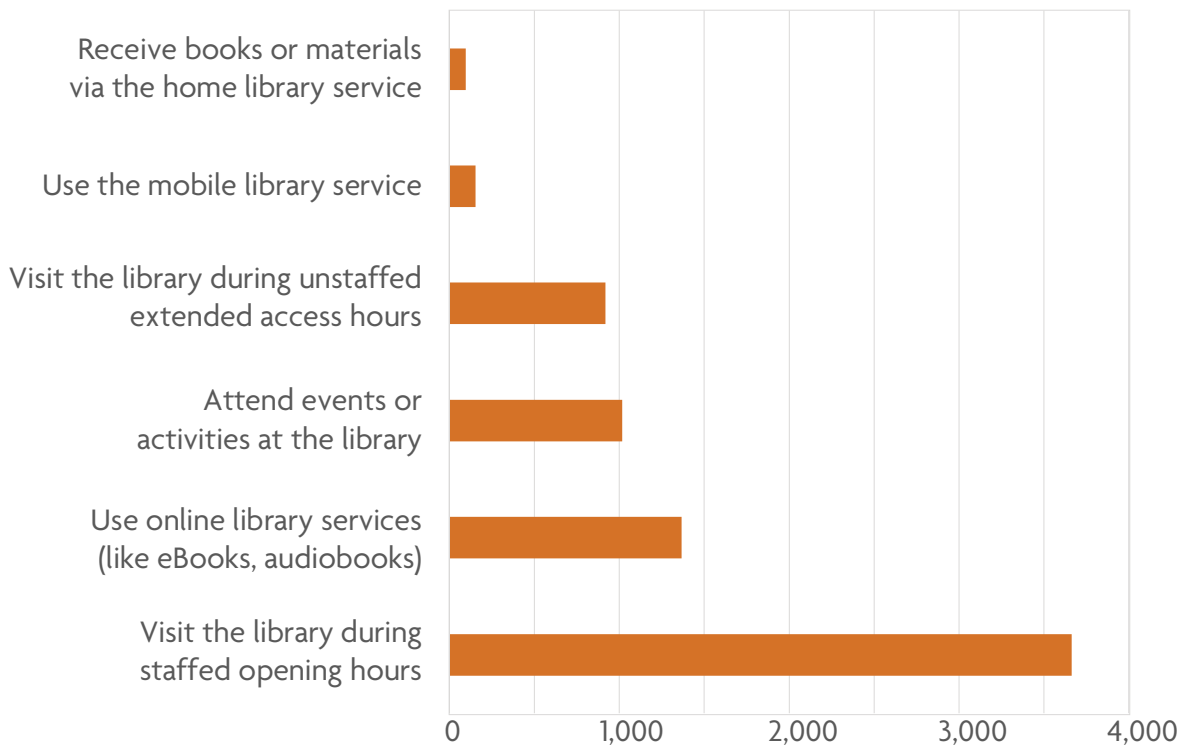
Others highlighted the seasonal value of libraries, with one respondent noting that *“I use the library as a warm space in winter, with the bonus of books.”* Some reflected on how their use has changed over time, such as the individual who commented, *“I used to use the library regularly when my children were young.”*

Together, these comments illustrate the diverse ways libraries support residents – from daily access to essential resources, to seasonal needs, and across different stages of life.

5.3. Ways respondents engage with library services

Figure 7 shows how respondents interact with library services.

Figure 7: Modes of engagement with library services



Usage type	Count
Visit the library during staffed opening hours	3,663
Use online library services (like eBooks, audiobooks)	1,366
Attend events or activities at the library	1,016
Visit the library during unstaffed extended access hours	918
Use the mobile library service	152
Receive books or materials via the home library service	95

The majority of respondents (83.1%) said they mostly visit the library during staffed opening hours. These patterns of engagement provide important context for the themes explored in Section 5.4.

5.4. Themes from written comments

Written comments provided further insight into how residents use library services. The main themes are summarised below.

5.4.1. Accessing books and reading materials

Borrowing books was the most frequently mentioned use of library services, with many respondents describing it as the main reason they visit a branch. Most people reported borrowing and collecting reservations during staffed hours, emphasising the value of having staff available to help locate items, offer recommendations, and support the reservation process. For many, this interaction formed an important part of their library experience.

Respondents valued being able to borrow regularly and access a wide range of titles through the LibrariesWest network. Many highlighted the convenience of reserving books online and collecting them locally. As one respondent explained, *“I often request books from other libraries in the South West network and collect them from my local branch.”* Another commented, *“Please don’t take away the ability to order books – it’s essential for our family.”*

Alongside borrowing itself, many respondents praised their local libraries as welcoming, well-run, and supportive places. One respondent noted, *“Borrowing books is simple, but it’s even better when staff are around to help.”* Another added, *“The staff are brilliant – they always help me find what I’m looking for.”*

Although mentioned by only a small number of respondents, those who did comment emphasised the importance of mobile library services for people who cannot easily reach a branch. This included older residents, people with limited mobility, and those living in areas with fewer transport options. One respondent said, *“Please don’t stop this service, it is so important for those of us getting older.”*

A few respondents also suggested that mobile provision could be expanded in certain communities where access to a physical library is limited or where public transport is poor. These views highlight the potential role of mobile services in improving reach and supporting residents who face barriers to accessing library buildings.

Together, these views underline that borrowing – supported by staffed access and a trusted local environment – remains at the heart of how residents use and value their library.

5.4.2. Using digital and IT services

Digital access featured prominently in the consultation feedback. Many respondents told us they use library technology regularly and consider it essential to managing daily activities. Computers, Wi-Fi, printing, scanning, and photocopying were frequently cited as vital facilities that support job searches, school and college work, family history research, and routine administrative tasks. These services were described as vital for residents needing reliable, affordable access to equipment.

Libraries also provide access to a range of digital reading platforms, including BorrowBox, which allow users to borrow eBooks, audiobooks, magazines and other digital content free of charge. Several respondents said they rely primarily on these

services, with one noting, *“I seldom visit the library in person but use BorrowBox all the time.”*

Alongside these platforms, respondents highlighted the importance of the LibrariesWest online catalogue and reservation system, which enables users to search for and request books from across the regional network. Some noted recent technical issues and stressed the need for continued investment in reliable digital systems.

Several respondents who had recently moved to North Somerset said the library was one of the first places they visited, especially before their home broadband was installed. As one new resident explained, *“When I first moved here, the library was the only place I could get Wi-Fi. I used it every day until my broadband was sorted.”*

Accessibility needs were also raised. Respondents stressed the importance of maintaining audiobook collections and digital formats for blind and partially sighted residents and ensuring that any changes do not reduce access to these resources.

Together, these views highlight the central role libraries play in supporting digital inclusion – providing equipment, connectivity, online resources, and a safe environment for study, work, and essential tasks.

5.4.3. Children, families, and schools

Another recurring theme was the important role libraries play in promoting children’s literacy, learning, and social development. Parents and carers described regular attendance at activities such as Rhymetime, Storytime, Lego Club, craft sessions, and holiday programmes, while childminders and schools reported bringing groups of children to participate. The Summer Reading Challenge was frequently mentioned as a valued initiative.

Respondents emphasised the wider benefits of these services, noting that libraries provide safe, welcoming, and affordable spaces for families. One parent explained, *“My two children love visiting the library – it’s broadened their horizons and encouraged their love of books.”* Another added, *“The public library gives ALL local residents access to a wide range of resources... especially crucial when home might not be able to accommodate this.”*

Beyond current use, many respondents reflected on the legacy value of libraries in their own lives. Adults often described how they had used libraries since childhood, recalling formative experiences of borrowing books, joining reading clubs, or attending activities that sparked a lifelong love of learning. These reflections underline the enduring impact of libraries across generations. As one respondent put it, *“I grew up in the library – it gave me opportunities I couldn’t have had at home, and now my children benefit in the same way.”* Another noted, *“Libraries have been part of my life since I was a child. They shaped my education, and I want the same for future generations.”*

Together, these views demonstrate that libraries are not only vital for children and families today but also carry deep personal and cultural significance as places

where generations have learned, connected, and grown. This legacy value reinforces the strength of feeling expressed in the consultation: libraries are seen as essential community assets whose benefits extend far beyond the present moment.

5.4.4. Libraries as community hubs and civic access points

Libraries were widely described as important community hubs, offering a broad range of activities that bring people together. Respondents also referred to a wide range of other activities, including craft groups, hobby clubs, author talks, and informal meet-ups, which were valued for fostering connection and shared interests. One respondent reflected, *“Whilst I have attended the quiz and coffee mornings, I have made friends who have both helped me and I have been able to help them.”* Another described the library as *“a peaceful, welcoming space that offers comfort, learning, and a sense of connection.”*

A few respondents praised the Conversation Café and other language-support activities. These sessions were described as vital for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners – residents whose first language is not English – helping them build confidence, practise language skills, reduce isolation, and integrate into the community. Respondents noted that these groups provide a friendly, accessible environment for newer residents to meet others and navigate local life.

Libraries were also described as essential access points for local information and democratic engagement, particularly for residents who cannot access online services. People reported using libraries to obtain council information, pick up printed materials, and meet elected representatives. One respondent explained, *“I see my local councillor when necessary and obtain council information – for example the garden waste calendar – as I am not able to access online information due to disability.”*

Several respondents also highlighted the role of libraries in supporting health and wellbeing. People valued the calm, safe environment, opportunities for social interaction, and the sense of routine and comfort that library visits provided. For some, simply spending time in a peaceful, welcoming space was an important part of maintaining their wellbeing.

These perspectives underline the role of libraries not only as social and learning spaces, but also as trusted civic venues where residents can access council information, engage with local decision-makers, and stay connected to essential services.

5.4.5. Accessibility, inclusion and community value

Respondents highlighted the role libraries play in reducing financial barriers to books, technology and educational resources. This was raised not only by those on low incomes, but also by residents who are otherwise financially secure yet increasingly mindful of rising household costs. One respondent explained, *“The library is a lifeline for us. We are a low-income family in that grey area where we earn too much for government help but not enough to keep up with the price of living. I love looking*

through non-fiction books and trying them out to see if it's something I could justify spending money on." Another added, *"As a pensioner, I use the library for both recreational reading and for research material to further my general interests. I believe that access to a library is vital for people of all ages."*

Alongside financial accessibility, respondents emphasised the importance of libraries for digital inclusion. Comments described libraries as essential for those without reliable access to computers or the internet at home. As one respondent put it, *"Not everyone can afford to buy books or has access to the internet at home. Libraries are essential for digital inclusion."* Another respondent commented, *"I don't have a computer at home, so the library is essential for me to access emails and print documents."*

Many respondents also highlighted the value of libraries as safe, calm and predictable environments, particularly for older residents, disabled users, neurodivergent people and families with young children. One resident shared, *"As an autistic person, libraries are our safe place. The reference librarians in my childhood library pretty much raised me. I would like to use the library here more."* Parents similarly described libraries as important for children's development and family wellbeing, with one noting, *"The library has been a sanctuary for me and my children, especially during difficult times."*

Several respondents described them as one of the few remaining public places where people can spend time without the expectation of paying. A Clevedon resident explained, *"On rainy days – of which there are plenty – this is the only free public building we can use in Clevedon. Without it, life outside the house with two children would be unaffordable."*

Taken together, these perspectives underline the role of libraries as inclusive, trusted community assets that provide far more than access to books. They offer safety, connection, digital access and essential support for residents who rely on them most.

5.4.6. Volunteering

Volunteering emerged as an important theme in the consultation, with many respondents describing the range of opportunities available and the value volunteers bring to their local libraries. Volunteers contribute time, skills, and enthusiasm across a variety of roles, supporting both day-to-day activity and specialist programmes.

Examples included helping to run children's reading initiatives, supporting digital skills sessions, and assisting with community groups. One volunteer explained, *"I help with the Summer Reading Challenge, which is a great way to support children's enjoyment of books."* Another highlighted the contribution of volunteers to digital inclusion: *"Along with two other volunteers we run a Code Club (Digilocal) at Worle Library for local children. Many of our students walk to the premises."*

Volunteers also described supporting activities such as digital buddy schemes, literacy sessions, and local events. As one respondent said, *“I have helped with the digital buddy scheme at Clevedon Library and the children’s reading challenge during school holidays.”*

These accounts illustrate volunteering opportunities available within libraries and the significant impact volunteers have in extending what libraries can offer. Their involvement reflects a strong sense of community ownership and partnership with staff, helping to sustain and enhance services across North Somerset.

These patterns of use provide important context for understanding respondents’ views on the proposals, which are explored in [Section 6](#).



6. Views on the proposals

This section presents the respondents' views on the proposed options for change and provides a summary of the key themes raised in their feedback.

6.1. Overview of proposals

Respondents were asked for their overall response to each of the proposals. Response numbers were broadly consistent across the options, with 2,911 responses to Option A, 2,919 to Option B, and 2,896 to Option C. For clarity, the consulted options were:

Option A

Community library management opportunities

Local communities were offered the opportunity to manage libraries with the lowest usage in Winscombe and Pill, with the potential to remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solutions were identified, Winscombe and Pill libraries would be subject to closure.

Worle Library and Children's Centre was identified as being at risk of closure unless a community-led or partner-led solution could be secured, due to the significant costs required for building repairs and ongoing maintenance.

Proposed service changes

- A reduction in opening hours was proposed across the remaining council-operated libraries.
- Where libraries closed, alternative methods of providing access to library services would be implemented to meet local needs.
- Reductions to central budgets were planned, including reducing spending on new books and digital resources by c£20k.
- An increase in income generation activities was proposed to support service sustainability.

Option B

Community library management opportunities

Local communities were offered the opportunity to manage Winscombe Library, with the potential to remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solutions were identified, Winscombe Library would be subject to closure.

Worle Library and Children's Centre was identified as being at risk of closure unless a community-led or partner-led solution could be secured, due to the significant costs required for building repairs and ongoing maintenance.

Proposed service changes

- A reduction in opening hours was proposed across the remaining council-operated libraries, including a full day closure at the For All Healthy Living Centre Library each week.
- Where libraries closed, alternative methods of providing access to library services would be implemented to meet local needs.
- Reductions to central budgets were planned, including reducing spending on new books and digital resources by c£30k.
- An increase in income generation activities was proposed to support service sustainability.

Option C

Community library management opportunities

Local communities were offered the opportunity to manage Pill Library, with the potential to remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solutions was identified, Pill Library would be subject to closure.

Worle Library and Children's Centre was identified as being at risk of closure unless a community-led or partner-led solution could be secured, due to the significant costs required for building repairs and ongoing maintenance.

Proposed service changes

- A reduction in opening hours was proposed across the remaining council-operated libraries, including a full day closure at the For All Healthy Living Centre Library each week.
- Where libraries closed, alternative methods of providing access to library services would be implemented to meet local needs.
- Reductions to central budgets were planned, including spending on new books and digital resources.
- An increase in income generation activities was proposed to support service sustainability.

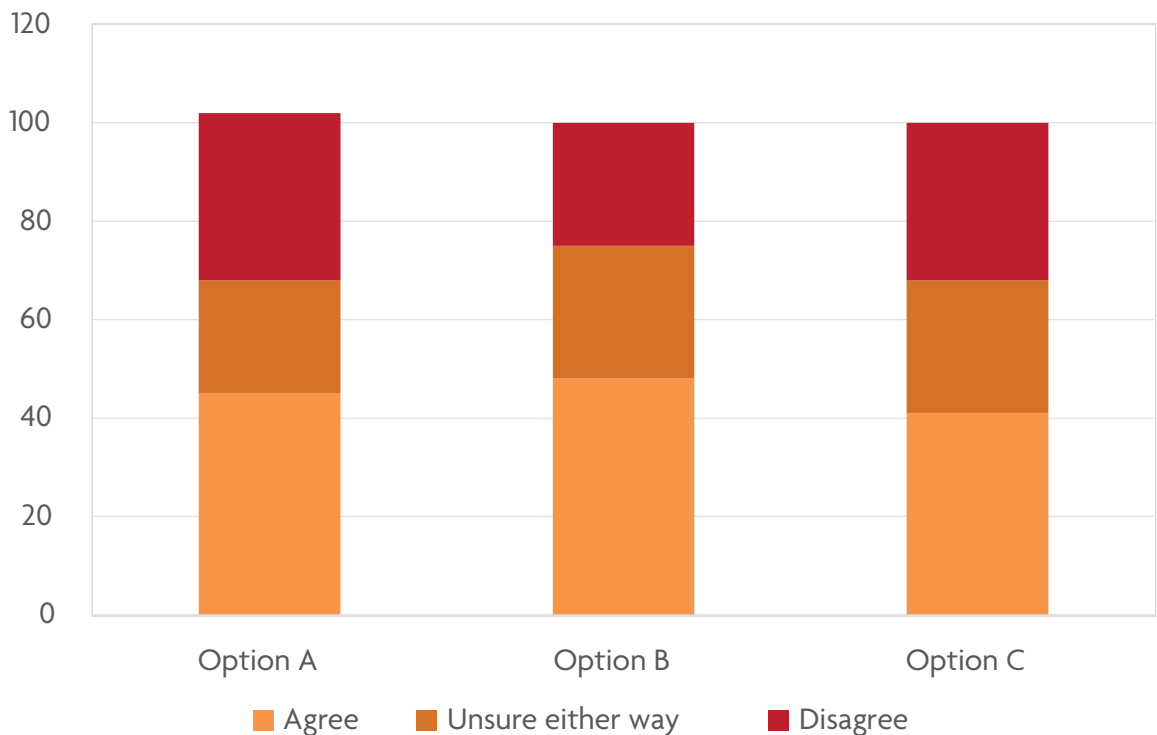
6.2. Views on the proposed options

The overall pattern of agreement with each option is summarised below and shown in the accompanying chart (see Figure 8). A full breakdown of responses, including the number of respondents who selected each level of agreement or disagreement, is provided in the annex 3.

- **Option A:** 43.0% agreed, 23.0% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 34.0% disagreed
- **Option B:** 48.0% agreed, 27.0% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 25.0% disagreed
- **Option C:** 41.0% agreed, 27.0% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 32.0% disagreed

It is notable that over 1,000 respondents did not provide an answer to any of the three proposals.

Figure 8: Levels of agreement with each option



	Agree	Unsure either way	Disagree
Option A	45	23	34
Option B	48	27	25
Option C	41	27	32

6.3. Overview of views on the options

Figure 8 shows that Option B received the highest level of agreement and the lowest level of disagreement of the three options. This option proposed retaining Pill Library within the North Somerset network, while closing Winscombe and Worle

Libraries unless a community managed solution came forward. Proposed reductions in other budgets, including removing £30k from the new books and resources budget, reductions in opening hours across other sites and increased income generation activity were also proposed.

All three options attracted broadly similar patterns of response (with Option B showing slightly more support). See [option summaries](#). Across all three options, around one quarter of respondents selected ‘neither agree nor disagree’, indicating that a notable proportion of respondents either did not engage with the options presented or felt unable to express a clear preference.

In the free text comments, many respondents expressed concerns about the potential impact of closures and reduced access. Many highlighted the importance of maintaining local access to books, digital services, support and community spaces. Some recognised the need for savings, but there was widespread worry about reduced opening hours, potential closures, and the effect these changes could have on people who rely on libraries.

A minority of respondents supported aspects of the proposals, including the suggested closures. Some felt that reduced opening hours would be preferable to losing a library altogether, while others argued the council should first consider alternative approaches such as income-generation initiatives or efficiency measures.

6.4. Summary of comments received in relation to the proposals

Most respondents discussed their views of the proposals without referencing which option they were referring to. The themes below bring together the main points raised and reflect the issues, concerns and suggestions shared by respondents.

6.4.1. Concerns about potential library closures and service reductions

Many respondents highlighted the role libraries play as community hubs and expressed strong concern about potential library closures. Comments raised included the potential for disproportionate impacts, particularly for rural communities and for areas where access to services or transport is limited. One respondent described libraries as *“a lifeline for parents, children, and the elderly”*, stating that closures would have *“long term consequences for our communities”*. Another respondent, commenting on their local library in Winscombe, said, *“Its closure would isolate many residents, particularly the elderly, in a large rural area with limited transport links.”*

A few respondents took a different view, supporting the closure of underused libraries and arguing that concentrating resources in larger, more accessible locations could be more efficient. Some felt that libraries were becoming less relevant in the digital age, with services increasingly shifting online.

One respondent commented, *“If libraries are underused, it makes sense to close them and focus resources on the most popular locations.”* Another said, *“I rarely use libraries anymore because of digital services. It’s time to modernise and focus on online resources.”*

Respondents also raised concerns about the impact of potential closures on children’s literacy and education. Comments highlighted the role libraries play in providing access to books, learning resources and safe study spaces. One respondent stated, *“Libraries are essential for children’s literacy and education. Closing them would deprive children of safe spaces to learn and grow”.*

Questions were also raised about the future of co-located services such as children’s centres if libraries at shared sites were to close. These comments related to the wider implications for families who rely on integrated provision. Others queried how savings would be achieved if buildings remained in use for children’s services, asking, *“There has been no mention of the children’s centre closing. Surely the building will have to be properly maintained if children are using it, so how will closing the library achieve the desired savings?”*

A few respondents raised concerns about the proposal to reduce book budgets, expressing worries that smaller or outdated collections could make libraries less relevant and discourage use. One respondent said, *“Not replacing books or keeping collections up to date is a false economy that will make libraries less relevant and deter users.”*

6.4.2. Views on extended access, opening hours and staffing

The value of trained library staff was frequently emphasised, with respondents describing them as knowledgeable, approachable, and essential for helping users navigate services. Some respondents expressed a preference for reducing staffed hours or expanding self-service options rather than closing libraries outright. While some appreciated the flexibility of extended access, concerns were raised about safety and accessibility, particularly for women, older people, and those unfamiliar with technology. As one respondent stated, *“Extended access works well and could be expanded, but it’s important to retain some staffed hours for those who need assistance.”*

One respondent said, *“Reducing hours is far better than losing services altogether. Most people can fit their visits into the proposed hours.”* Another added, *“Reduced staffed hours are better than no hours”.* Others linked extended access directly to saving at-risk libraries: *“Extended access is brilliant. I would rather see a further day of extended access opening if it could save Pill and Winscombe.”*

6.4.3. Views on community-led libraries

Views on community-led libraries were mixed. A small number of respondents indicated they would be willing to volunteer if required, with one stating, *“If it’s*

not possible to keep Winscombe library open as a directly run service, I would be prepared to volunteer as part of a community scheme.”

Alongside this, many respondents expressed uncertainty or concern about the sustainability of a volunteer-run model. Comments highlighted the challenges of relying on volunteers in areas where capacity may already be limited or where communities face barriers to accessing services. One respondent said, *“Volunteers already do lots in the village, and I think it will be very difficult to get sufficient people to work the library on a voluntary basis.”*

Some respondents also raised concerns about the potential devaluation of professional librarians, with one stating, *“Relying on volunteers to run libraries devalues the professionalism of trained librarians and risks long-term sustainability.”*

Feedback from parish councils and ward members are summarised in Section 12 and 13.

6.4.4. Libraries as accessible spaces and digital inclusion

A recurring theme across the consultation was the importance of libraries as accessible spaces for all, particularly for those without alternative resources. Respondents emphasised that libraries provide free access to books, computers, and the internet – services that are essential for individuals who cannot afford them at home. As one respondent put it, *“Not everyone can afford to buy books or has access to the internet at home. Libraries are essential for digital inclusion.”*

Vulnerable groups frequently mentioned included older residents, disabled users, families with young children, neurodivergent people, and those on low incomes. Several respondents described libraries as safe, calm and predictable environments that support wellbeing. One resident shared: *“As an autistic person, libraries are our safe place. The reference librarians in my childhood library pretty much raised me. I would like to use the library here more.”*

Libraries were also valued as warm, welcoming spaces for social interaction and community connection. Parents highlighted their importance for children’s development and family wellbeing. One respondent noted, *“The library has been a sanctuary for me and my children, especially during difficult times.”* Another commented on the wider social role of libraries, saying, *“Libraries are one of the last free public spaces where people can gather without the expectation of spending money.”*

For some, libraries were described as the only affordable indoor space available locally. A Clevedon resident explained: *“On rainy days – of which there are plenty – this is the only free public building we can use in Clevedon. Without it, life outside the house with two children would be unaffordable.”*

6.4.5. Concerns about social inequalities and community impact

Respondents expressed concerns that closures would make social inequalities worse, particularly in places where the library is seen as a crucial resource for low-income families. One respondent commented that *“the savings from closing libraries are minimal compared to the long-term costs of increased social isolation and reduced literacy.”*

Some respondents emphasised that libraries are essential community resources and highlighted the importance of maintaining access to books and learning, with a few referencing the council’s commitments in the Libraries Strategy to support this.

Several respondents asked for clearer information on library usage, costs and the potential impacts of the proposals to support informed decision-making. Some provided local insights and examples from their own communities to help ensure the Equality Impact Assessment reflects lived experience. These contributions will be considered as part of the council’s ongoing review of the assessment.

6.4.6. Views of the consultation

Some respondents commented on the consultation process itself. These comments focused on how the information was presented and how easy it was to navigate. A number of respondents said they found the format challenging to follow, with one commenting, *“The format used to describe these changes makes it difficult to compare the three options.”*

Several respondents also expressed uncertainty about the references to Worle Library. Although it was included in the proposals, some said they could not easily identify it within the documentation. Comments included: *“Worle library does not seem to be on these options. It would be a great shame if this closes as I know it is well used by children from the nearby school,”* and *“Where is Worle library listed?”*

6.4.7. Views on wider spending priorities

Some respondents questioned whether reducing library services was the most effective way to achieve financial savings and wanted reassurance that other potential options for reducing costs or generating income had been fully explored before changes to opening hours or potential closures were considered.

A number of respondents also referred to wider council decisions and local issues when reflecting on the proposals. These included concerns about parking fees and investment in Clevedon seafront. While not directly related to the library proposals, such feedback reflected broader perceptions of how the council prioritises spending and manages financial pressures.

Respondents raised concerns about the longer-term sustainability of library services. They questioned whether the current proposals might signal further reductions in the future and expressed uncertainty about the council’s ongoing ability to maintain investment in the service.

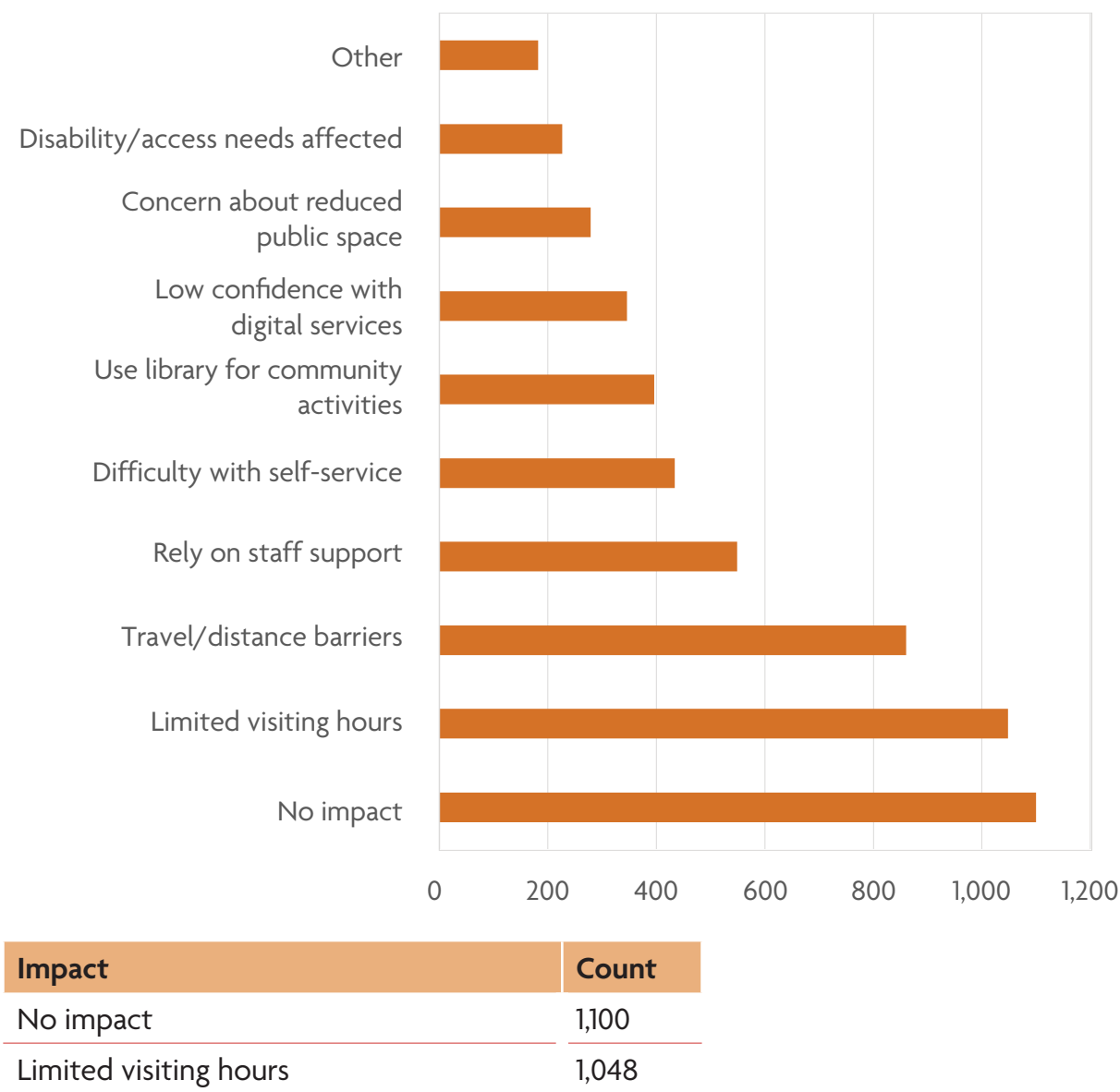
7. Impact of the proposals

This section summarises the impacts respondents felt the proposals would have on themselves, their households and their wider communities.

7.1. Overview of perceived impacts

Respondents were invited to select from a predefined list of possible impacts, with the option to choose more than one. A breakdown of the results is shown in **Figure 9**. The most common response was “no impact” (1,100 individuals). However, this requires careful interpretation. In many cases, “no impact” referred only to respondents’ own circumstances; these individuals nonetheless expressed concern about how the proposals could affect others, particularly children, older adults, disabled residents, and people experiencing financial hardship. A smaller proportion of respondents indicated that they would genuinely be unaffected.

Figure 9: Reported impacts of proposed library changes



Impact	Count
Travel/distance barriers	860
Rely on staff support	549
Difficulty with self-service	434
Use library for community activities	396
Low confidence with digital services	346
Concern about reduced public space	279
Disability/access needs affected	226
Other	182

Beyond this, the next most commonly reported concerns related to reduced staffed hours, difficulties travelling to alternative libraries, reliance on staff support, and low confidence in self-service or digital-only options. Respondents also highlighted the importance of libraries for community activities, safe public space and inclusion, with additional comments on disability access, book budgets and local identity.

Many respondents provided free-text comments that helped illustrate how the proposals could affect them, their households and their wider communities. The main impacts are summarised below.

7.1.1. Impact on access and convenience

One impact highlighted was that the effect of the proposals would vary significantly depending on where people lived and on their individual circumstances, particularly for those who live far from alternative branches or who have limited mobility.

Respondents in rural areas described long walking routes, limited bus services and the practical difficulties this creates for people who cannot travel far, older adults and those without access to a car. One resident explained, *“If Winscombe library closes, the nearest library is over an hour’s walk away, and there’s no reliable bus service.”*

Some noted that it would be difficult to travel between certain North Somerset towns or villages by public transport, meaning that accessing an alternative library would be challenging for those without a car or with limited mobility.

7.1.2. Impact on learning and development

Respondents highlighted a range of impacts on children, young people and learners. Libraries were described as essential for children’s education, school readiness and literacy, and as one of the few places offering quiet, reliable study space. Students and jobseekers noted that reduced evening or weekend hours would limit their ability to complete homework, revise, or carry out job searches.

Parents also emphasised the developmental role of early years groups and family activities. One explained that *“our much-needed baby groups, who offer support and an olive branch to new parents, would be demolished.”* Others said that reduced

Saturday hours would restrict children's access to books and limit family reading routines: *"My children love going to the library to choose their own books. It's helped them develop a love of reading."*

Activities such as Rhyme Time, Lego clubs and the Summer Reading Challenge were described as important opportunities for children to read, learn and take part in structured activities outside school. As one parent noted, *"The Summer Reading Challenge is the only time my son agrees to read at all."* Respondents felt that reduced provision would limit these opportunities and affect children's access to learning and enrichment.

7.1.3. Community and social impact

Respondents highlighted a range of community and social impacts. Libraries were described as safe, welcoming places where people can spend time and meet others. Older adults in particular noted that libraries help reduce loneliness, with one describing it as *"a warm, safe space where I can meet people and feel part of the community."* Another respondent explained, *"I enjoy coming to read in the library as a public space. It reduces isolation and is a social activity as opposed to reading at home."*

Alongside this, respondents highlighted the impact on community activities that rely on library spaces. Libraries were described as one of the few accessible venues available for a wide range of groups and events, including early-years sessions, craft clubs, reading groups, support groups, and activities for older residents. Many stressed that losing access to these spaces – or having fewer staffed hours in which they can run – would reduce opportunities for social connection, learning and community participation. Respondents noted that libraries host a breadth of activities that would be difficult to relocate elsewhere, and that reduced availability of space could limit the number and variety of groups able to operate.

7.1.4. Impact of reduced book and digital budgets

Respondents also raised concerns about the potential reduction in budgets for new books and digital resources. Many emphasised that access to a wide range of up-to-date titles is a key reason for using the library, and that a smaller budget could reduce choice and discourage use. One respondent noted, *"I rely on the library for new releases and audiobooks. A smaller budget will mean fewer options."*

Several respondents highlighted the importance of digital services such as BorrowBox and the LibrariesWest website/app. As one respondent put it, *"The reliability of the LibrariesWest website/app is more important to me than whether the library is staffed or not when I collect the books."*

7.1.5. Impact on library staff and service quality

Respondents consistently highlighted the central role of library staff in making services accessible, welcoming and effective. Staff were praised for their knowledge, kindness and personalised support, with many residents explaining that they rely on staff for tasks they cannot complete independently, particularly where digital systems or self-service technology present barriers. For example, one respondent described how staff help them reserve and issue books because using screens can trigger seizures.

Across the authority, staff were described as friendly, approachable and essential to creating a safe and supportive environment. Comments included: *“Staff always helpful,”* *“The staff at Nailsea Library are EXCELLENT,”* and *“My children love talking to the library staff.”* Some residents also noted the long-standing personal relationships they had built with staff – in some cases from an early age – and felt that reduced staffed hours could disrupt this continuity of support.

Alongside this appreciation, respondents expressed concern about the impact of reduced staffed hours, potential closures and increased reliance on volunteers. They felt these changes could limit access to support for disabled residents, older people and those with low digital confidence; place additional pressure on remaining staff; and reduce the human, relational element that many value. Several also noted the “unseen” work staff carry out – such as supporting residents wellbeing and managing complex enquiries – and questioned how this could be sustained with fewer staff or shorter hours.

Respondents also raised concerns about the pressure the proposals could place on staff, including workload, job security and the ability to maintain service quality. In comments about the mobile library service, particularly in rural areas, some questioned whether it could adequately replace a permanent branch. A small number of volunteers also noted that while they value how the mobile service is currently run, it would be difficult for it to meet local needs if the nearest physical branch were to close.

Overall, respondents conveyed a strong message: library staff are highly valued, and changes that reduce staffed presence or shift responsibilities to volunteers were seen as having wide-ranging implications for both service quality and staff wellbeing.

8. Reducing impacts, exploring alternative models, and income generation ideas

Consultation responses included a wide range of suggestions to reduce the impact of the proposals. Ideas focused on adapting service delivery, improving digital access, strengthening community involvement, and generating income, with many respondents offering practical, locally informed solutions.

8.1. Suggestions for maintaining service delivery and access Respondents proposed several ways to maintain access while reducing costs:

- **Extending self-service and unstaffed hours**, supported by clearer information and training for less confident users.
- **Improving and expanding mobile library provision**, particularly in rural areas, **through more frequent visits and better stock rotation**.
- **Strengthening digital services**, including increasing the range of ebooks and audiobooks and reducing wait times.
- **Restoring or enhancing digital magazines and newspapers**, which some felt had declined in quality.

These suggestions focused on maintaining access to core services while adapting delivery methods to reduce pressure on physical buildings and staffed hours.

8.1.1. Staffing and community-led models

Some respondents suggested volunteer involvement to support tasks such as shelving, events, or extended access hours. Others emphasised that volunteers should complement, not replace, professional staff, and that any community-led model would require training, coordination and ongoing council support.

Hybrid models – combining paid staff with volunteers – were suggested as a way to retain professional expertise while broadening community participation. Equity considerations were also raised, with concerns that volunteer capacity varies between communities: *“Wealthier villages, where people are more likely to be retired, will be able to open a community library whereas poorer communities are unlikely to be able to do so.”*

8.1.2. Access and opening hours

To maintain accessibility, respondents proposed:

- **Tailoring opening hours** to local demand, including evenings and weekends.
- **Coordinating hours across nearby libraries** so at least one branch remains open at key times.
- **Promoting extended-access schemes**, as some residents were unaware of them.
- **Offering any training on extended-access systems on multiple days and at different times**, to ensure residents with varying schedules can take part.
- **Ensuring transport links** support access to libraries with reduced hours or consolidated services.

These ideas focused on preserving practical access for working people, families, young people and those without private transport.

8.2. Income generation activities

8.2.1. Hiring out library space

The most common income-generation suggestion was to make greater use of library spaces for hire. Respondents proposed:

- Meeting rooms for community groups, classes, workshops and study sessions
- Spaces for baby groups, children's parties, author events and clubs
- Commercial or semi-commercial uses such as training sessions or co-working

Others stressed that hiring must not reduce public access or compromise the quiet, inclusive nature of libraries. Some worried that not all buildings are suitable for hire.

8.2.2. Partnerships and co-location opportunities

Respondents suggested exploring partnerships with schools, charities, health services and local businesses. Ideas included:

- Shared spaces with schools to reduce running costs
- Co-located services that attract high footfall
- Facilities such as cafés or refreshments to support longer visits and co-working

8.2.3. Other income-generating approaches

Respondents also suggested:

- Modest charges for reservations, printing or premium digital services, provided fees remained low enough not to deter use.
- Rotating stock, hosting book sales and accepting book donations to reduce purchasing and keep collections fresh.
- Energy-efficiency measures to reduce running costs, especially during extended-access hours.
- Retail options such as vending machines, pop-up cafés or small refreshment points to generate income and support longer visits.
- Voluntary donations, Friends groups, and legacy giving as ways for communities to contribute directly.
- Exploring sponsorship opportunities with safeguards around political messaging and advertising.
- Fundraising events such as events, book fairs, auctions, craft markets and community galas.
- Introducing carefully controlled advertising within libraries, provided that robust safeguards are in place to prevent political, commercial, or otherwise inappropriate content that could compromise the neutrality of library spaces.
- Using income from local parking charges to support library services
- Introducing optional membership schemes, where residents can contribute voluntarily in return for small benefits (for example, early event booking).
- Reviewing underused assets (for example, storage areas, surplus furniture) to identify items that could be sold or re-purposed.



9. Community involvement

This section summarises respondents’ views on community involvement in sustaining library services, including interest in supporting or helping to run a community-managed library.

9.1. Community interest in supporting a managed library

Respondents were asked whether they would be interested in supporting or helping to run a community-managed library at one of the sites currently at risk. This question was designed to gauge the level of local appetite for community involvement in sustaining library provision. Table 4 below shows the breakdown of responses:

Table 4: Interest in supporting a community-managed library

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	337	13.0
No	1,255	49.0
Not sure	971	38.0
Total	2,563	100.0

Although the majority did not feel able to commit, it is notable that 13.0% of respondents expressed interest. This represents a significant minority and demonstrates genuine community appetite for exploring the option. While not widespread, this level of support suggests a committed group of residents could form the basis for future involvement, provided clear expectations, resources, and support are in place.

It should also be noted that not all consultation respondents answered this question, suggesting that many did not feel in a position to commit.

Finally, while the table provides a snapshot of individual responses, the consultation also heard from town and parish councils and community groups. These are discussed in Section 12 and 13.

10. Equalities monitoring

This section summarises the equalities monitoring information provided by respondents and highlights how participation varied across different demographic groups.

10.1. Overview

Equalities monitoring data helps identify whether different groups of people are being reached and treated fairly. The data in this section is based only on respondents who completed the consultation through econsult or paper copies. Feedback submitted through other channels was not provided in a structured format and could not be included in this analysis. Findings therefore reflect the characteristics of those who chose to respond, rather than a representative sample of the North Somerset population.

In this section, Census 2021 refers to results based on data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in Census 2021: Population and household estimates, North Somerset. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

10.2. Age of respondents

A total of **2,899 respondents** (66.0% of all respondents) provided their age. The age profile of respondents was weighted towards older residents.

Table 5: Age profile of respondents

Age group	Number	% of those who gave age
Under 16	11	0.4
16-20	28	1.0
20-24	26	0.9
25-29	53	1.8
30-34	150	5.2
35-39	214	7.4
40-44	265	9.1
45-49	237	8.2
50-54	197	6.8
55-59	192	6.6
60-64	283	9.8
65-69	329	11.4
70-74	367	12.7
75+	547	18.9

Younger residents were significantly under-represented: only 1.4% of respondents were under 20, compared with 17.6% of the North Somerset population (Census 2021). Middle-aged groups (35-54) made up 31.5% of responses, broadly in line with local demographics. Older residents were over-represented, with nearly 60.0% of respondents aged 55+, compared with 23.9% of the local population aged 65+.

The consultation provides detailed insight into the views of older residents, but younger voices are under-represented.

10.3. Sex of respondents

Of the **4,403 respondents**, **2,797** (64.0%) provided their sex.

Table 6: Sex profile of respondents

Sex	Number	% of those who gave their sex
Male	881	31.5
Female	1,916	68.5

Female respondents made up more than two-thirds (68.5%) of those who provided this information, compared with 51.0% of the North Somerset population (Census 2021). Male respondents accounted for 31.5%, compared with 49.0% of the local population. The consultation reflects a higher proportion of female respondents compared to the local population.

10.4. Ethnicity of respondents

Of the **4,403 respondents**, **2,797** (64%) provided their ethnicity.

Table 7: Ethnicity profile of respondents

Ethnicity	Number	% of those who gave ethnicity
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	2,610	93.3
Irish	17	0.6
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0.0
Roma	1	0.0
Any other White background	86	3.1
White and Black Caribbean	4	0.1
White and Black African	4	0.1
White and Asian	18	0.6
Mixed other	10	0.4
Indian	6	0.2

Ethnicity	Number	% of those who gave ethnicity
Pakistani	1	0.0
Bangladeshi	2	0.1
Chinese	12	0.4
Any other Asian background	8	0.3
African	1	0.0
Caribbean	2	0.1
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background	4	0.1
Other ethnic group	5	0.2
Arab	1	0.0
Any other ethnic group	5	0.2

The majority of respondents (93.3%) identified as English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British, broadly reflecting the local population (96.0% White, Census 2021). People from minority ethnic backgrounds were represented in small numbers, accounting for less than 3.0% of responses compared with around 4.0% of the local population.

Perspectives from minority ethnic groups are present but limited due to low response numbers.

10.5. Health and disability

A total of **2,898 respondents** (66.0%) provided information about whether they have a physical or mental health condition lasting 12 months or more that affects their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

Table 8: Health profile of respondents

Response	Number	% of those who gave response
Yes, a lot	175	6.0
Yes, a little	418	14.4
No	2,275	78.6

Overall, 20.4% of respondents reported a condition that affects their daily activities, which is broadly in line with Census 2021 data for North Somerset (19.7%). The proportion of respondents reporting that their condition affects them “a lot” (6.0%) is slightly lower than the local population figure (9.1%). The consultation includes a range of experiences from people with long-term health conditions, though responses from those whose conditions affect them most strongly are somewhat fewer in number.

10.6. Language of respondents

A total of **1,901 respondents** (43.0%) provided information about the language(s) they speak and read

Table 9: Language profile of respondents

Language response	Number	% of those who gave language
English is their first language	1,802	94.8
English is not their first language	27	1.4
Can speak English very well	59	3.1
Other	13	0.7

The majority of respondents (94.8%) reported English as their first language. A small proportion (1.4%) reported that English is not their first language, and 3.1% said they speak English very well even though it is not their first language. The overall profile is broadly in line with Census 2021 data for North Somerset, although people whose first language is not English appear to be slightly under-represented.

10.7. Residence of respondents

A total of **3,872 respondents** (88.0%) provided a postcode that could be matched to a ward within North Somerset.

Table 10: Ward location of respondents

Ward	Number	% of those who gave postcode
Backwell	86	2.2
Banwell and Winscombe	297	7.7
Blagdon and Churchill	48	1.2
Clevedon East	75	1.9
Clevedon South	54	1.4
Clevedon Walton	107	2.8
Clevedon West	92	2.4
Clevedon Yeo	58	1.5
Congresbury and Puxton	54	1.4
Gordano Valley	167	4.3
Hutton and Locking	77	2.0
Long Ashton	124	3.2
Nailsea Golden Valley	120	3.1
Nailsea West End	78	2.0

Ward	Number	% of those who gave postcode
Nailsea Yeo	99	2.6
Nailsea Youngwood	63	1.6
Out of area	24	0.6
Pill	375	9.7
Portishead East	154	4.0
Portishead North	134	3.5
Portishead South	81	2.1
Portishead West	220	5.7
Weston-super-Mare Central	101	2.6
Weston-super-Mare Hillside	98	2.5
Weston-super-Mare Kewstoke	189	4.9
Weston-super-Mare Mid Worle	60	1.6
Weston-super-Mare Milton	85	2.2
Weston-super-Mare North Worle	106	2.7
Weston-super-Mare South Ward	62	1.6
Weston-super-Mare South Worle	84	2.2
Weston-super-Mare Uphill	93	2.4
Weston-super-Mare Winterstoke	73	1.9
Wick St Lawrence and St Georges	47	1.2
Winford	27	0.7
Wrington	59	1.5
Yatton	201	5.2

The highest numbers of responses came from Pill (9.7%), Banwell and Winscombe (7.7%), and Portishead West (5.7%). Other wards with notable engagement included Yatton (5.2%), Weston-super-Mare Kewstoke (4.9%), and Gordano Valley (4.3%). Smaller numbers of responses were received from rural wards such as Blagdon and Churchill (1.2%), Wick St Lawrence and St Georges (1.2%), and Winford (0.7%). A small number of respondents (0.6%) provided postcodes outside North Somerset.

When compared with Census 2021, engagement varied across the area. Pill, Banwell and Winscombe, and parts of Portishead contributed a higher share of responses than expected for the size of their populations. In contrast, responses from Weston-super-Mare wards and smaller rural areas were proportionally lower. This reflects the self-selecting nature of the consultation, where people who felt most affected by the proposals were more likely to take part.

Areas with particularly high engagement included:

- **Pill (9.7%):** With around 6,000 residents (less than 3.0% of the population), Pill contributed more than three times its population share.
- **Banwell and Winscombe (7.7%):** With around 9,000 residents (about 4.0% of the population), this ward contributed nearly double its population share.
- **Portishead West (5.7%):** Engagement was high relative to the ward's size within the wider Portishead area.
- **Gordano Valley (4.3%):** Slightly over-represented compared with its population. Heatmap analysis suggests residents use several different libraries and were well engaged.

Wards with lower engagement included:

- Weston-super-Mare wards, which together account for more than a third of North Somerset's population but individually contributed fewer than 3.0% of responses.
- Smaller rural wards, including Blagdon and Churchill, Wick St Lawrence and St Georges, and Winford, each contributing around 1.0% or less.

Overall, the consultation achieved strong engagement across North Somerset, with particularly high participation in Pill, Banwell and Winscombe, and Portishead. However, the uneven distribution of responses means the findings do not fully reflect the geographic profile of the area and should be interpreted with this in mind.

10.8. Additional barriers to accessing library services

Respondents were invited to describe any additional factors that make it harder for them to access or use library services. Feedback covered a broad range of personal circumstances and practical considerations. Many respondents highlighted the value of libraries as welcoming, staffed spaces and described how different aspects of service design can influence their ability to use them.

Common themes included:

- **Physical access:** some respondents noted that mobility difficulties, reliance on public transport, parking costs, or uneven pavements and ramps can make travel to and from libraries more challenging.
- **Digital access and confidence:** a number of respondents said they feel less confident using online systems or self-service technology. They emphasised the value of in-person support, particularly for those who are less familiar with digital tools.
- **Neurodiversity:** while libraries were often described as calm and supportive environments, some respondents mentioned that sensory factors, such as noise or lighting, can affect their experience.

- **Language and communication:** a small number of respondents whose first language is not English said they sometimes find written information difficult to understand and appreciate support from staff and conversation groups.
- **Financial pressures:** some respondents noted that the cost of travel, parking or limited household budgets can influence how often they are able to visit a library.
- **Awareness of services:** a number of respondents said they were not aware of certain services, such as extended-access hours or digital resources, and suggested clearer communication.
- **Opening hours and staffing:** some respondents with work or caring responsibilities said that limited opening times can make it harder for them to visit. Others highlighted the value of staff presence for guidance and reassurance.
- **Social and wellbeing needs:** several respondents described libraries as important community spaces that offer routine, connection and a place to study or relax.

Additional suggestions included creating sensory-friendly spaces, strengthening engagement with schools and young people, improving communication about available services, and ensuring resources and displays reflect a broad range of interests. Some respondents also noted that access to computers and the internet at libraries is important for those who do not have these at home. Respondents also highlighted opportunities to support access further, particularly through clear communication, consideration of different needs, and the continued availability of staffed spaces.



11. Site-specific and drop-in session feedback

This section summarises feedback relating to specific library sites, including comments submitted through the main questionnaire and insights gathered during drop-in sessions held at those locations.

11.1. The Campus Library

The Campus Library was mentioned in 135 responses (around 3.0%), often in connection with the proposed closure of Worle Library, as it is the nearest alternative for many residents. People described it as a modern, multi-purpose facility valued by students and families, though some noted practical issues such as transport links, reduced staffed hours and the availability of stock. Suggestions included improving transport connections, extending self-service access and strengthening community engagement.

At the drop-in session, challenges highlighted included travelling to the site from Worle without a car and the need for clearer information about how to use different library sites. They also reflected on the wider impact of changes elsewhere in the area and emphasised the value of services such as the ability to renew books.

11.2. Clevedon Library

Clevedon library was mentioned in 212 responses (around 5.0%). Clevedon library was highlighted positively in many responses, with residents valuing its role as a community hub offering extended access, children's activities and support for reading, learning and study. The proposed 30minute reduction to Saturday opening hours was generally seen as a minor change, though some respondents were concerned about the longer-term impact of reduced funding on book stock, staffing and resources. Suggestions included generating income through room hire, events and partnerships with local organisations.

Feedback from the two drop-in sessions echoed these themes. Attendees praised the library's services and asked questions about future provision, including the possibility of reopening on Thursdays and how book budgets would be managed. Many emphasised the importance of access to books, children's programming and opportunities for social contact, and some felt that additional local support – including from Clevedon Town Council – could help sustain and develop the service. Others expressed interest in expanding events and activities to attract a wider range of users.

11.3. Congresbury Library

Congresbury Library was mentioned in 36 responses (less than 1.0%), but the feedback provided clear insight into how the service is valued locally. Respondents frequently highlighted it as a strong example of a community-led model, praising the commitment of volunteers and the ongoing support provided by North Somerset Council, particularly for IT systems and outreach.

Residents described the library as an important local amenity for families, children and older people, supporting literacy, social connection and community life. Suggestions for future development included strengthening links with schools and community groups, improving transport options for those who find travel difficult, and exploring additional funding opportunities such as developer contributions.

11.4. For All-Healthy Living Centre

The For All Healthy Living Centre Library was mentioned in 16 responses (less than 0.5%). Although a small proportion of overall feedback, respondents consistently described it as a safe, welcoming space valued by children, families and people who may be more vulnerable. Staff support was praised, and some felt that reduced staffed hours could make the service harder to use. Suggestions included exploring self-service options, involving volunteers, strengthening links with schools and community groups, and offering more activities to support engagement.

Feedback from the drop-in session reflected similar themes. Attendees spoke positively about staff and the wider benefits the library provides, particularly access to printed newspapers and public computers, which are important for adults with learning disabilities and those supported by carers. One attendee described using the library to update personal details during a period of housing disruption, highlighting the service's role for residents experiencing change.

A few practical issues were raised, including poor mobile phone signal affecting two-factor authentication on public computers. Attendees also discussed the value of extended access, the importance of printing services, and the positive way staff interact with young people. Some felt that Saturday opening would be helpful.

11.5. Home Library Service

The Home Library Service was mentioned by eight respondents (less than 0.2%). Although a small proportion of overall feedback, comments highlighted its importance for residents who cannot visit a library in person, providing access to books and maintaining a connection with the wider service. One volunteer noted the value of close working with library staff and felt that changes to staffed hours or the wider network could affect how the service operates. Respondents suggested raising awareness of the Home Library Service so that more eligible residents know it is available.

11.6. Mobile Library Service

The Mobile Library was mentioned in 240 responses (around 5.0%). Residents highlighted its importance for rural communities and for people who find it difficult to travel to a library building, valuing the flexible access it provides. Some felt that the current timetable, short stop durations and stock range could limit how useful the service is.

Respondents suggested that if more people rely on the Mobile Library in future, its capacity may need to be reviewed. Ideas included more frequent visits, additional stops at schools and care homes, better publicity, and equipping the vehicle with resources such as Wi-Fi or computers. A small number of respondents questioned whether the Mobile Library offers good value compared with investing in static libraries or digital services.

11.7. Nailsea Library

Nailsea Library was mentioned in 177 responses (around 4.0%). Respondents highlighted its welcoming staff, central location and value for families, children and older people. Some noted the impact of new parking charges and the proposed reduction of 1.5 staffed hours per week. Extended Access was helpful for some users but not suitable for everyone. A number of respondents also felt that book stock has been more limited since the library's relocation, particularly for teenagers, and stressed the importance of maintaining a varied collection. Suggestions included hosting more events, partnering with local organisations, expanding outreach to schools, hiring out space and improving promotion of Extended Access and digital services.

Feedback from the two drop-in sessions reflected similar themes. Attendees asked about future staffing levels, stock budgets and whether volunteer-run models were being considered. Additional questions covered parking charges, links with children's centres, the role of the outreach officer, opportunities for sixth-form volunteering and how Extended Access could be promoted more widely.

Opening hours were a key topic. For example, some attendees queried the effect of the proposed 30minute reduction on Saturdays. Staff noted that many customers use the library on an ad hoc basis, and some attendees felt that a full-day closure each week could affect usage patterns.

11.8. Pill Library and Children's Centre

Pill Library and Children's Centre were mentioned in 314 responses (around 7.0%). Residents described the library as a safe, welcoming space that supports families, children and older people, and plays an important role in reducing isolation. Many felt that closure would disproportionately affect those without access to a car, as travel to other libraries can be difficult. Option B – retaining Pill Library under council management – received strong support. Suggestions included extending opening hours through self-service or volunteer involvement, improving promotion, generating income through room hire or fundraising, and reinstating some Children's Centre activities.

Feedback from the two drop-in sessions echoed these themes. Attendees emphasised the library's importance in a community with higher levels of low-income households and asked questions about how usage data had been interpreted. Some noted that Pill has fewer staffed hours and no Extended Access, which they felt affects comparisons

with other sites. There was interest in exploring longer opening hours or Extended Access, while recognising the value of trained staff in providing support and specialist knowledge.

Attendees also discussed the reduction in Children's Centre services and the impact on families, highlighting the library's role in supporting children's literacy, social interaction and access to information. Transport barriers were raised, particularly for residents who rely on buses. Questions were also asked about the financial implications of different options and how investment is prioritised across the area.

There was strong support for Pill Library to remain council-run, with many emphasising the stability and expertise that trained staff provide. At the same time, there was clear community interest in contributing to the library's future. Both the Parish Council and the newly formed Friends of Pill Library group expressed commitment to supporting the service through volunteering, fundraising and promoting activities, alongside continued council management.

11.9. Portishead Library

Portishead Library was mentioned in 219 responses (around 5.0%). Residents highlighted its popularity, central location, ease of parking and good transport links. The library was valued as a busy community hub offering Extended Access, study space, children's activities and support for remote working. Many appreciated the convenience of reserving books online through LibrariesWest and collecting them locally. Concerns about the proposed 30minute reduction to Saturday opening hours mainly related to the impact on working people and families. Suggestions included expanding Extended Access, promoting services more widely, generating income through room hire or events, and strengthening outreach to schools and community groups.

Feedback from the drop-in session reflected similar themes. Attendees shared ideas for strengthening community links, including partnerships with local organisations and opportunities for volunteering. Some suggested additional study space and wider promotion of library services, such as placing information in GP surgeries or local venues.

Views on the future role of libraries varied. One attendee questioned the long-term need for public computers, while others emphasised the continuing importance of library services, including specialist staff to support children and young people. The value of centrally managed book purchasing and the contribution of the Home Library Service were also highlighted.

11.10. Weston-super-Mare library

Weston-super-Mare Library was mentioned in 200 responses (around 5.0%).

Respondents highlighted its role as a central and accessible service, valued for its study space, family activities, digital support and specialist resources such as the Local Studies Library. Staff were frequently praised for their support and expertise. Some

respondents were concerned about the proposed reduction to weekday evening and Saturday hours, noting that this could affect working people and families, students and those who rely on weekend access. Suggestions included expanding the library's role as a community hub, exploring income generation through events or room hire, and considering alternative venues in the longer term.

Feedback from the drop-in session was generally positive. Attendees did not raise concerns about the proposed changes and felt that the proposals would have limited impact on Weston Library. One attendee noted that additional provision in the Worle area may be helpful for residents who would find it difficult to travel to the Campus Library if changes were made there.

11.11. Winscombe library

Winscombe Library was mentioned in 251 responses (around 6.0%). Residents described it as a well-used and valued hub serving a wide rural area, supporting families, children, older people and those without digital access at home. Concerns centred on the potential impact of closure, particularly given the library's central, walkable location and the limited public transport to alternative sites. Respondents emphasised its role in supporting literacy, social connection and digital inclusion. While opposition to closure was strong, some felt that reducing staffed hours or expanding Extended Access could be considered as alternatives.

Feedback from the drop-in session reflected similar themes. Attendees noted that demand for the library may grow as the local population increases. Extended Access was viewed positively, and questions were raised about the future of the building and how running costs are managed. The library's visibility and position near the village centre were seen as key strengths, and some suggested that local organisations could help support the service. Others felt that any changes to opening hours should be shared fairly across the network.

Accessibility was a significant issue. Residents who do not drive, or who rely on mobility scooters, said they would struggle to reach other libraries. Attendees also highlighted the library's social role, including reading groups, coffee mornings and informal community contact. Views were mixed on volunteer-run models, with some uncertainty about capacity and continuity. While the mobile library was appreciated, most felt that a static library better meets local needs. Suggestions included exploring alternative buildings if relocation were required.

Some respondents asked about the financial case for different options and how savings compare with the wider council budget. They also pointed to Winscombe's older demographic, limited nearby provision and poor transport links as factors reinforcing the need for a local service. Respondents also expressed strong support for fundraising, with donations mentioned frequently as a preferred approach. Additional points included the importance of providing consultation materials in the library, access to home delivery services and the availability of reserved books.

11.12. Worle Library and Children's Centre

Worle Library was mentioned in 276 responses (around 6%). Residents highlighted its central location near Worle High Street and its importance for older people, families and those without private transport. Concerns focused on the impact of closure on access to books, computers and printing. While some acknowledged the financial challenges associated with the current building, others suggested exploring options such as relocation, community-led models or partnership approaches.

Feedback from the two drop-in sessions echoed these themes. Attendees described the library as a well-used local facility offering a wide range of activities, including reading groups, craft sessions, quizzes, coffee mornings and groups for families and older residents. Transport was a key issue, with many feeling that the Campus Library would be difficult to reach due to limited public transport links, making Worle particularly important for those who may struggle to travel elsewhere.

Attendees also asked about building maintenance, investment plans and how decisions about the site had been made. Some raised questions about the future of the polling station and other local facilities, such as the Local Studies opening times at the Town Hall. Several attendees queried the future of the children's centre and sought clarity on what changes were being proposed. Suggestions included renting out space to community organisations and considering alternative locations within Worle if relocation were required.

Attendees discussed the timing of the consultation in relation to town and parish council budget cycles and noted that some local councils were awaiting further information before considering community-managed options.

11.13. Yatton Library and Children's Centre

Yatton Library was mentioned in 83 responses (around 2.0%). Residents highlighted its well-used activities – including rhyme time, Lego clubs and reading groups – and valued its role in supporting families, children and older people. Staff were frequently praised, and the library was seen as a safe, inclusive space.

12. Town and parish council and ward member feedback

12.1. Overview

This section summarises the views of town and parish councils and ward members across North Somerset on the library consultation proposals. Responses have been assessed in table format for clarity and consistency and grouped where multiple submissions were received from the same area. Summary response tables are provided in [annex 5](#).

A total of **25 responses** were received from **12 different town and parish councils and ward members**. Some areas submitted more than one response (including Pill and Wrington), while others provided a single submission. Feedback ranged from acceptance of reduced staffed hours to strong opposition to closures. Pill and Abbots Leigh provided particularly detailed submissions describing the importance of their local libraries as community assets.

Across all responses, several common themes emerged: the role of libraries as trusted and accessible spaces; concerns about transport and the impact on communities facing greater socioeconomic challenges; questions about the feasibility of volunteer-led models; and a range of constructive suggestions for income generation and partnership working.

12.2. Libraries as community hubs

Town and parish councils consistently emphasised that libraries provide more than book lending services. They were described as trusted, accessible places that support wellbeing, reduce isolation and offer digital access. Pill, Winscombe, Churchill and Abbots Leigh highlighted the role of their local libraries in providing warm, welcoming spaces and hosting activities for children, families and older residents. Winscombe & Sandford noted that usage data may not fully reflect demand, citing issues with access technology, and emphasised the contribution of the library's central location to local activity and footfall.

12.3. Concerns about equity and access

Responses from Pill, Abbots Leigh and Wrington referenced local socioeconomic indicators and highlighted the importance of maintaining services in areas with higher levels of need. Pill West was noted as an area where residents may face additional barriers to accessing alternative provision. Wrington raised concerns that reducing static library provision could affect mobile library services across rural North Somerset, particularly for older residents without transport. Bleadon similarly highlighted limited

public transport and the absence of local schools as factors affecting access if nearby libraries were to reduce hours or close.

12.4. Mixed views on community management

Congresbury & Puxton, referenced their own community-managed library as a positive example. Others expressed reservations. Abbots Leigh and Pill & Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council did not support community-managed models, citing limited volunteer capacity and the potential impact on communities with higher levels of need. The ward member for Pill suggested phased changes and support for Friends of Pill group, while emphasising the importance of ensuring that residents who rely most on library services are not disproportionately affected.

12.5. Pragmatic acceptance of reduced hours

Several councils, including Flax Bourton and Wrington, acknowledged the financial pressures facing the council and indicated that reduced staffed hours, smaller stock budgets or increased self-service provision could be acceptable compromises. Nailsea Town Council, while neutral on the options, noted that external factors such as parking charges may influence library use.

12.6. Constructive ideas to protect library services

Councils and ward members offered a range of practical suggestions to support the long-term sustainability of library services, including:

- Income generation through room hire, charging community groups and engaging local businesses (Abbots Leigh, Pill & Easton-in-Gordano, Yatton).
- Extended or unstaffed hours to broaden access (Pill & Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council; Pill ward member).
- Partnerships with schools, health services and community organisations to integrate libraries more closely with local service delivery (Pill ward member; Abbots Leigh Parish Council).
- Digital inclusion initiatives, such as loaning devices to residents who may face barriers to accessing online services (Mid Worle ward member).

12.7. Overall sentiment

Overall, town and parish councils and ward members expressed concern about potential closures and questioned whether alternative models would meet community needs. While recognising the financial context, many emphasised the social, educational and health benefits of libraries and the importance of maintaining

accessible provision, particularly in areas with limited transport or higher levels of socioeconomic need.

More detailed summaries of the views expressed by Pill & Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council and Winscombe & Sandford Parish Council are provided in the next section ([Section 13](#)), **Email and letter responses**.



13. Email and letter responses

13.1. Overview

As part of the consultation process, nine submissions were received via email and letter. Each submission has been reviewed and is summarised below to provide a clear record of the views expressed. The single letter from a resident has been incorporated into the general responses. These are summarised by location where possible. In addition to these formal submissions, further correspondence was received from 68 individuals during the consultation period. Officers replied to this correspondence, and in some cases dialogue is ongoing.

13.2. Emails related to Pill Library and Children's Centre

13.2.1. Friends of Pill Library

The Friends of Pill Library strongly oppose the closure or transfer of Pill Library to community management, advocating instead for its retention as a council-managed, community-supported service. They highlight the library's vital role in a small community with limited local services, particularly for children, families, and vulnerable individuals. The library hosts over 100 events annually, provides free IT access, and serves as a safe, warm space. Its location in Pill West, one of North Somerset's most deprived areas outside Weston-super-Mare, makes it a crucial preventative service, supporting education, wellbeing, and reducing social care demand.

Concerns were raised about the disproportionate impact of closure on disabled people, women, children, and the elderly, as identified in the Equality Impact Assessment. Accessibility is also a key issue, with the nearest alternative library in Portishead being costly and impractical for many residents. The financial case for closure is questioned, as the savings would be minimal compared to the overall library budget. The group argues that Pill Library offers excellent value for money, with lower per-resident costs than other North Somerset libraries.

Suggestions include exploring alternative cost-saving measures, such as reducing staffed hours in other libraries, and using Section 106 developer contributions to fund future improvements. They reject community management as unsustainable, citing limited local volunteer capacity and ongoing council costs. Instead, they propose enhancing the library through fundraising, events, and volunteer-supported extended hours, aligning with government guidance. They emphasise the library's growing importance due to planned housing developments and national literacy initiatives.

The Friends of Pill Library also undertook an engagement exercise at a local market event, capturing 16 responses to the proposed closure. All of the notes opposed closure and emphasised the library's valuable role within the community.

13.2.2. Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council

The Parish Council expressed support for Option B, which proposes that Pill Library continues to be managed and funded by North Somerset Council. This position was shared with the Friends of Pill Library group, reflecting a view that a council-run service is the most sustainable model for ensuring long-term viability.

Parish councillors engaged actively throughout the consultation process. Their position throughout the consultation period emphasised the library's role as a valued local asset in an area identified as having high need.

A formal consultation response was submitted early in the process. In addition to setting out their support for Option B, the Parish Council raised several concerns:

- **Transparency and openness:** Attendees at the drop-in meeting reported perceptions that the session was primarily focused on community-managed models, with limited exploration of alternatives.
- **Inclusivity of engagement:** Residents highlighted conflicting information about feedback methods, restricted drop-in hours, limited outreach to schools and businesses, and barriers for digitally excluded groups, particularly older residents.
- **Presentation of data:** Consultation materials described Pill Library as the least used in North Somerset. Residents noted this did not account for limited opening hours or local population size and therefore risked misleading comparisons.
- **Equality considerations:** The Equality Impact Assessment was viewed as underestimating potential impacts of closure on vulnerable groups, including children and older people.
- **Funding and analysis:** Concerns were raised about disparities in funding allocation compared to less deprived areas, and about the objectivity and transparency of post-consultation data analysis.

The Parish Council sought a detailed response by 17 October 2025. North Somerset Council provided this as part of continued discussions with the Parish Council.

13.3. Emails related to Winscombe Library

13.3.1. Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council

Winscombe & Sandford Parish Council submitted a detailed response to the consultation, strongly advocating for continued council funding and support for Winscombe Library (Option C). They highlighted the library's role as a vital community hub, fostering social connection, learning, and wellbeing, particularly for elderly and vulnerable residents. It emphasised the library's contribution to mental health, lifelong learning, and community cohesion, as well as its economic impact on the village centre by driving footfall to local businesses. Concerns were raised about equity and

accessibility, noting that alternative libraries are not realistically accessible for many due to limited public transport and the area's ageing population.

The Parish Council questions the reliability of current usage data provided by North Somerset Council, citing technical issues with the out-of-hours access system that likely under-report actual demand. They also expressed concern about the timeline for decision-making, requesting an earlier indication of NSC's direction to facilitate financial planning.

Other enquiries were raised, including the condition of the library building, ownership or lease arrangements, potential TUPE implications for staff, and whether the council will retain income from fines and charges. Clarification is also sought on the continuation of centrally funded services (e.g., IT, cleaning, book stock) and the availability of S106 contributions for the library.

They encouraged the council to carefully consider these points and provide timely responses, stressing the library's importance as a community asset and its role in supporting social and economic vitality in the area.

13.4. Email related to all North Somerset library services

13.4.1. Healthy and Sustainable Communities Directorate, North Somerset Council

The Healthy and Sustainable Communities Directorate of North Somerset Council submitted a response highlighting the critical role libraries play in supporting the Council's Corporate Plan ambitions, particularly in health, wellbeing, education, inclusion, economic opportunity, and cultural engagement. They commended libraries as trusted, non-stigmatising spaces that reduce social isolation, support mental health, and provide safe environments, especially for vulnerable groups. Libraries' contributions to digital inclusion, employability, and cultural placemaking were also praised.

Key concerns included the potential impact of reduced physical access to libraries on vulnerable groups, such as those without digital access, older adults, disabled residents, and low-income families. They stressed the importance of mitigating these impacts through enhanced outreach, digital inclusion support, and partnerships with health and community services. The response also raised concerns about the sustainability and equity of community-managed library models, noting that not all communities have the capacity to replicate successful examples like Congresbury.

Suggestions for improvement included maintaining digital access and skills support as a core priority, exploring co-location opportunities with other cultural and community services, and ensuring community-managed libraries receive adequate training, funding, and professional input. They also proposed expanding public health services in libraries, such as health checks, stop smoking clinics, and healthy lifestyle advice, to generate income and enhance service impact.

The Directorate emphasised the need for robust Equalities Impact Assessments to guide decision-making and ensure changes are equitable and inclusive. They expressed willingness to collaborate on transforming library services through joint initiatives and place-based planning.

13.5. Letters related to Winscombe

13.5.1. Year 6 pupils, Winscombe Primary School

A group of Year 6 pupils from Winscombe Primary School submitted a handwritten letter expressing their opposition to the proposed closure of Winscombe Library. They described the library as a calm, reliable space for people of all ages, valued for its accessible facilities, supportive staff, and role in promoting reading – particularly through initiatives like the Summer Reading Challenge. The letter also raised concerns about potential job losses for librarians and the impact of replacing the library with a commercial outlet.

13.5.2. Year 5 pupils, Winscombe Primary School

Pupils from Maple Class, Year 5 at Winscombe Primary School submitted a letter expressing their support for retaining Winscombe Library. They highlighted the library's role in providing free access to books, supporting learning, and encouraging reading through initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge. The letter described the library as a valued part of the community and raised concerns about the emotional impact of closure, potential job losses, and the loss of routine for regular users.

13.6. Letters related to Worle

13.6.1. Dan Aldridge, Member of Parliament for Weston-super-Mare

A submission was received from Dan Aldridge, Member of Parliament for Weston-super-Mare, expressing support for maintaining a library service in Worle. He described libraries as vital community assets that provide access to information and inclusive spaces for learning and connection. He welcomed North Somerset Council's proactive approach to consultation and encouraged continued collaboration with Voluntary Action North Somerset (VANS), other voluntary groups, and local residents to identify a sustainable solution. The success of Congresbury Library, operated by volunteers, was cited as a positive example of community partnership. He offered his continued support to protect this local service for Worle.

13.6.2. Weston-super-Mare Labour Party

A submission was received from the Weston-super-Mare Labour Party regarding the future of Worle Library. The letter expressed concern about the risk of closure due to budget pressures and unresolved structural issues, including damp and wet rot. It

welcomed the council's consultation and emphasised the importance of libraries as community hubs that provide access to learning, books, and safe spaces for all ages. The Labour Party urged the council to work collaboratively with including Voluntary Action North Somerset (VANS), residents, and their local MP Dan Aldridge, to identify a viable solution. They confirmed their willingness to contribute, including through volunteering, to help sustain a library service in Worle for current and future generations.

13.6.3. Local resident letter

One resident submitted a letter commenting on the proposals for Worle Library and Children's Centre. The writer described the library as a convenient and well-used local facility for their household and praised staff for being helpful and informative. They expressed concern about the potential impact of closure on their ability to access services. While recognising the financial context, the resident suggested that efficiencies could be explored before reducing local provision.



14. Children's survey results

14.1. Overview

As part of the wider consultation on the future of libraries in North Somerset, a dedicated survey was conducted with children and young people to ensure their voices were directly heard. Libraries play a unique role in children's learning, leisure, and social development, and the survey sought to capture their experiences, the aspects they value most, and their ideas for improvement. This feedback provides a fuller picture of community priorities and highlights the perspectives of a group often under-represented in formal processes.

The findings from the children's survey will be used to ensure that decisions about the future of library services are inclusive and equitable. By understanding the needs and preferences of different age groups and communities, the council can work to minimise barriers to access and ensure that library services continue to support children's learning, leisure, and social development.

14.2. Age of respondents

The survey received 500 responses, with the largest group of respondents aged 5-8 years (33.2%), followed by those aged 9-11 years (24.2%). Children aged 0-4 years accounted for 21.2% of responses, while 12-15 year-olds made up 17.0%. A small proportion (4.4%) preferred not to state their age.

When comparing younger children (0-8 years) with older children (9-15 years), younger children were more strongly represented, accounting for 54.4% of responses, compared to 41.2% from older children. This suggests that younger children and their families may be more engaged with library services or more likely to participate in the survey.

It is important to note that the age profile of respondents is not fully representative of the child population in North Somerset, as indicated by the 2021 Census⁶. Younger children, particularly those aged 5-8, are over-represented, while older children aged 12-15 are under-represented. Findings should therefore be interpreted as illustrative of children's perspectives, with particular weight towards younger age groups.

The breakdown of responses by age is shown in Table 11.

⁶ Based on 2021 Census data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Census 2021: Population and household estimates, North Somerset. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

Table 11: Age of respondents

How old are you?		
Answer choice	% response	Response total
0-4	21.2	106
5-8	33.2	166
9-11	24.2	121
12-15	17.0	85
Prefer not to say	4.4	22
answered		500
skipped		0

14.3. Libraries used by respondents

Children reported visiting a wide range of libraries across the area, as summarised in Table 12.

Table 12: Libraries visited by respondents

Which Libraries do you visit?		
Answer choice	% response	Response total
Campus Library	11.8	59
Clevedon Library	16.6	83
Congresbury Library	3.8	19
For All Healthy Living Centre (HLC)	8.0	40
Mobile Library	3.6	18
Nailsea Library	21.2	106
Pill Library	15.4	77
Portishead Library	19.8	99
Weston -super-Mare Library	16.2	81
Winscombe Library	5.2	26
Worle Library and Children's Centre	11.8	59
Yatton Library and Children's Centre	12.8	64
answered		500
skipped		0

Answer choice	% response	Response total
None	0.2	1
Prefer not to say	0.0	0
Other – please tell us	2.4	12
answered		500
skipped		0

Children reported visiting a wide range of libraries across North Somerset. The most frequently visited were Nailsea Library (21.2%) and Portishead Library (19.8%), followed by Clevedon Library (16.6%) and Weston-super-Mare Library (16.2%). Smaller but notable proportions of children reported using Pill Library (15.4%), Yatton Library (12.8%), and Worle Library and Children's Centre (11.8%).

A small number of respondents (2.4%) mentioned other libraries, including school libraries, Clifton Library, Bristol Central Library, and online resources. Only one respondent (0.2%) indicated that they do not visit any library.

14.4. Frequency of library visits

Patterns of library use varied, but most children reported visiting regularly. Table 13 shows how often.

Table 13: Frequency of library visits

How often do you visit the library?		
Answer choice	% response	Response total
Daily	3.2	16
At least once a week	39.6	198
Once to twice a month	42.4	212
Every few months	17.2	86
Once or twice a year	1.0	5
I have used it before but not recently	2.2	11
Prefer not to say	0.4	2
answered		500
skipped		0

The majority of children reported visiting the library regularly, with 42.4% attending once or twice a month and 39.6% visiting at least weekly. A smaller proportion (17.2%) reported visiting every few months, while infrequent use (once or twice a year, or not

recently) was rare (3.2% combined). Daily visits were also uncommon (3.2%) but notable given the age group.

Younger children (0-8 years) were more likely to visit libraries frequently, with many attending weekly or monthly as part of family routines. Older children (9-15 years) were more likely to visit less frequently, reflecting differences in how age groups engage with library services.

14.5. Timing of library visits

Children were also asked when they typically visit libraries. Libraries were most commonly visited at weekends (66.6%) and after school (56.8%), indicating that they are primarily used outside of formal school hours. Around a third (30.0%) of respondents also visited during weekdays, while very few attended before school (0.8%).

Free-text responses highlighted that many children visit libraries during school holidays, half terms, or the summer, often for activities such as the Summer Reading Challenge. Others mentioned attending rhyme time, Storytime, coding clubs, or stay-and-play sessions, often accompanied by parents, childminders, or grandparents.

Table 14 summarises when children typically visit libraries.

Table 14: Timing of library visits

When do you visit the library?		
Answer choice	% response	Response total
Before school	0.8	4
During the day (week days)	30.0	150
After school	56.8	284
Weekends	66.6	333
Other – please tell us	14.0	70
answered		500
skipped		0

14.6. Importance of libraries

Children overwhelmingly identified free book borrowing (93.8%) as the most important role of libraries, followed by learning and literacy (62.0%) and activities and events (57.4%). Free internet and computer access (32.0%), information services (19.2%), and printing facilities (18.2%) were also valued.

Free-text responses emphasised the importance of libraries as safe, welcoming, and quiet spaces for reading, studying, and spending time. Many children highlighted the role of friendly staff in creating a positive experience, as well as the value of activities such as Lego Club, rhyme time, and the Summer Reading Challenge. Libraries were also seen as places for socialising, fostering community spirit, and providing free access to books for families who might otherwise struggle to afford them.

Table 15 shows which aspects of library services children consider most important.

Table 15: Importance of library services

What do you think are the most important things libraries do?

Some examples are listed but please tell us any other reasons

Answer choice	% response	Response total
Learning and literacy	62.0	310
Free book borrowing	93.8	469
Activities and events	57.4	287
Free internet and computers	32.0	160
Printing	18.2	91
Information	19.2	96
Other – please tell us	14.2	71
answered		500
skipped		0

14.7. Impact of library closures

Children were asked how they would be affected if their nearest library closed. Table 16 summarises how children felt they would be affected if their nearest library closed.

Table 16: Impact of nearest library closing

What would happen if your nearest library closed?

Answer choice	% response	Response total
I would not be able to borrow books any more	89.	448
I would not have anywhere quiet to go	30.8	154
answered		500
skipped		0

Answer choice	% response	Response total
I would miss going to library events or activities	56.6	283
I would not have anywhere to go after school or in the holidays	34.4	172
I would not have access to computers or technology	13.6	68
Anything else – Please tell us		87
answered		500
skipped		0

The majority of children (89.6%) indicated that the closure of their nearest library would prevent them from borrowing books. More than half (56.6%) said they would miss attending library events and activities, while around a third noted they would lose a quiet place to go (30.8%) or somewhere to spend time after school and during holidays (34.4%). A smaller but significant group (13.6%) emphasised the loss of access to computers and technology.

Free-text responses revealed emotional and practical concerns about library closures. Many children described feeling sad, upset, or angry at the prospect, with some highlighting the loss of access to books, activities, and a safe space to study or socialise. Practical barriers, such as increased travel distances and costs, were also raised, particularly for families reliant on walking or public transport.

14.8. Ability to visit another library if nearest is closed

Children were also asked whether they would be able to access another library if their nearest one closed. Most children indicated that closure of their nearest library would make access to another library difficult. Over half (58.6%) said they could not go by themselves, and 57.0% felt travelling would be difficult. Nearly half (46.0%) noted that other libraries were too far away, while only 15.4% felt they could visit another library without issue. Table 17 shows whether children felt they could access another library if their nearest one closed.

Table 17: Ability to visit another library

If your nearest library closed, would you be able to visit another library?		
Answer choice	% response	Response total
I could not go by myself	58.6	293
answered		500
skipped		0

Answer choice	% response	Response total
The other libraries are too far away	46.0	230
Travelling to another library would be difficult	57.0	285
I could visit another library	15.4	77
Anything else – Please tell us		93
answered		500
skipped		0

Free-text responses highlighted the importance of local libraries such as Worle, Portishead, Pill, Nailsea, Weston, Clevedon, Winscombe, and Yatton. Many children described these libraries as integral to their routines, with proximity enabling regular visits. Families emphasised the accessibility of libraries like Nailsea for children with disabilities and the importance of Clevedon Library's extended access and welcoming staff.



Annex

This annex provides supporting details on the consultation proposals. It sets out the types of changes being considered, the three options for achieving savings, the engagement activities undertaken, and the responses received from parish councils and ward representatives.

Annex 1. Information on the three proposed options for change

Overview

This section outlines the broad areas where changes could be made, explaining what each involves and its possible impacts.

To help meet savings targets and keep a sustainable library service across North Somerset, the Council is proposing a range of changes. These focus on how services are delivered, how costs are reduced, and how income is generated.

Summary of potential changes

Table 19 shows the elements that are likely to change under each of the three options. We've also provided further information on each option (Option A, Option B, Option C) and its potential impacts to help you make an informed response.

Table 18: Overview of changes for Options A, B and C

Potential changes

Community-managed libraries	
What this could involve:	In some areas, we may no longer run a library directly. Instead, local community groups could be supported to take on management.
What this could involve:	Libraries could remain open in areas where a council-run model is no longer sustainable – but this would depend on local capacity and interest.
Alternative service delivery	
What this could involve:	In places where libraries may close or change, services could be offered differently (for example, via mobile library, drop-off points, partner venues, or the Home Library Service).
Possible impacts:	People would still have access to library services, but in new formats or locations. Some people may have to travel further or use services differently.

Changes to opening hours

What this could involve: Staffed hours may be reduced in some libraries, based on usage patterns. In some cases, self-service access could be extended so libraries remain open without staff present.

Possible impacts: Libraries would still offer access to a range of services but with fewer staffed hours. Customers may need to visit at different times than currently or visit during self-service hours

Reducing central budgets

What this could involve: Savings could be made in areas like central staffing, the new book and digital resources budget, management, IT systems, equipment and stationery.

Possible impacts: Libraries would still have a range of books available to customers but spending on new books would reduce. The way services are supported behind the scenes would be affected.

Income generation

What this could involve: Increased promotion of library spaces for hire, advertising, or partnerships with local organisations.

Possible impacts: This could bring in income to help support core services – but may reduce space available for community use in some locations.

Option A

This option should achieve the full amount of savings if implemented in full. It could involve closing up to three libraries, alongside a reduction in opening hours across the remaining council-run libraries. Libraries would be kept open in locations where population and usage are highest. Savings would also be made from central budgets, including spending on new books and digital resources.

The impact on communities would depend on which, and how many, libraries closed and the number that transitioned to community-managed libraries.

Local communities would be offered the opportunity to manage libraries with lowest usage in Winscombe and Pill.

This would help keep these valued services running locally using volunteers. If community libraries form, they could potentially remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led

solutions are found, these libraries may unfortunately have to close so that the required level of savings can be made. Where libraries close, access to library services will be offered in other ways to address local need. Feedback from the community is welcomed to help shape what support is offered.

Worle – due to anticipated future maintenance and repair costs, alongside the fact that alternative library services are available 1.5 miles away, the library is unable to keep operating from this venue. The community are invited to help shape the offer locally.

Under this Option for Change (A), the following libraries are not at risk of closure. However, the following table shows proposals for opening hours to be reduced in order to achieve additional savings from the staffing budget.

Table 19: Option A – Proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations

Below is a list of libraries, a description of the proposed change, reduction in weekly staffed hours and a summary of mitigations (a mitigation is a way of reducing the impact or its effect).

Campus library

Changes: Close at 6pm instead of 8pm on weekdays.
Close at 1pm instead of 5pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

Reductions: 18

Mitigations: Introduce further self service facilities, enabling an overall increase in opening hours of 17 per week

Clevedon library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

Congresbury community-managed library

Changes: No change

Reductions: No change

Mitigations: None

For All Healthy Living Centre library

Changes: Close between 12.30pm and 1.30pm Monday – Friday

Reductions: 5

Mitigations: Explore self-service opening

Nailsea library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays.
Close at 5pm instead of 6pm on Tuesdays.

Reductions: 1.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

North Somerset Studies library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 4pm on Saturdays.
Close two days per week.

Reductions: 15.5

Mitigations: Promote new opening hours.
Make alternative study space available.

Portishead library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

Weston-super-Mare library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 4pm on Saturdays.
Close at 5pm instead of 6pm on weekdays.

Reductions: 8.5

Mitigations: Explore feasibility of extending self-service hours between 5pm and 6pm daily.
Promote digital access to library and council services.

Yatton library and children's centre

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

Total saving of £433k.

Option B

A further option to achieve the full amount of savings if implemented in full is to close up to two libraries, alongside a reduction in opening hours across the remaining council-run libraries. Libraries would be kept open in locations where population and usage are highest and at Pill where usage is low, but community need is considered high. Keeping Pill Library as part of the North Somerset network would reduce the amount needed to be invested in outreach for that community. However, an additional £10,000 savings would be required on top of those for Option A from the new books and digital resources budget. To find the additional saving required it is proposed that the For All Healthy Living Centre library closes on Mondays, when its usage is lowest. The full list of proposed changes to opening hours to fund this option are shown below.

The impact on communities would depend on which, and how many, libraries closed and the number that transitioned to community-managed libraries. An analysis of the potential impact is available at [Libraries consultation – North Somerset Council Consultations](#)

The local community would be offered the opportunity to manage Winscombe Library, to keep the valued service running locally using volunteers. If a community library formed, it could potentially remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solution is found, this library may unfortunately have to close so that the required level of savings can be made. Where libraries close, access to library services will be offered in other ways to address local need. Feedback from the community is welcomed to help shape what support is offered.

Worle – due to anticipated future maintenance and repair costs, alongside the fact that alternative library services are available 1.5 miles away, the library is unable to keep operating from this venue. The community are invited to help shape the offer locally.

Under this Option for Change (B), the following libraries are not at risk of closure. However, the following table shows proposals for opening hours to be reduced in order to achieve additional savings from the staffing budget.

Total saving: £433k

The detail is shown in the accompanying information at [Libraries consultation – North Somerset Council Consultations](#)

Table 20: Option B – Proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations

Below is a list of libraries, a description of the proposed change, reduction in weekly staffed hours and a summary of mitigations (a mitigation is a way of reducing the impact or its effect).

Campus library

Changes: Close at 6pm instead of 8pm on weekdays
Close at 1pm instead of 5pm on Saturdays and Sundays

Reductions: 18

Mitigations: Introduce further self service facilities, enabling an overall increase in opening hours of 17 per week

Clevedon library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

Congresbury community-managed library

Changes: No change

Reductions: No change

Mitigations: None

For All Healthy Living Centre library

Changes: Close between 12.30pm and 1.30pm Tuesday-Friday
Close all day Monday

Reductions: 11.5

Mitigations: Explore self-service opening

Nailsea library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays
Close at 5pm instead of 6pm on Tuesdays

Reductions: 1.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

North Somerset Studies library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 4pm on Saturdays
Close two days per week

Reductions: 15.5

Mitigations: Promote new opening hours.
Make alternative study space available.

Pill library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Portishead library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

Weston-super-Mare library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 4pm on Saturdays
Close at 5pm instead of 6pm on weekdays

Reductions: 8.5

Mitigations: Explore feasibility of extending self-service hours between five and six daily.
Promote digital access to library and council services.

Yatton library and children’s centre

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

Option C

A further option to achieve the full amount of savings if implemented in full is to close up to two libraries, alongside a reduction in opening hours across the remaining council-run libraries. Libraries would be kept open in locations where population and usage are highest and at Winscombe where usage is relatively low to town libraries but where the library serves a significant rural population. Keeping Winscombe Library as part of the North Somerset network would reduce the amount needed to be invested in outreach to that community. However, an additional £10,000 savings would be required on top of those for Option A from the new books and digital resources budget. To find the additional saving required it is proposed that the For All Healthy Living Centre library closes on Mondays, when its usage is lowest. The full list of proposed changes to opening hours to fund this option are shown below.

The impact on communities would depend on which, and how many, libraries closed and the number that transitioned to community-managed libraries.

The local community would be offered the opportunity to manage Pill Library, to keep the valued service running locally using volunteers. If a community library was formed, it could potentially remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solution is found, this library may unfortunately have to close so that the required level of savings can be made. Where libraries close, access to library services will be offered in other ways to address local need. Feedback from the community is welcomed to help shape what support is offered.

Worle – due to anticipated future maintenance and repair costs, alongside the fact that alternative library services are available 1.5 miles away, the library is unable to keep operating from this venue. The community are invited to help shape the offer locally.

Under this Option for Change (C), the following libraries are not at risk of closure. However, the following table shows proposals for opening hours to be reduced in order to achieve additional savings from the staffing budget:

Total saving: £433k

Table 21: Option C – Proposed changes to opening hours and mitigations

Below is a list of libraries, a description of the proposed change, reduction in weekly staffed hours and a summary of mitigations (a mitigation is a way of reducing the impact or its effect).

Campus library

Changes: Close at 6pm instead of 8pm on weekdays.
Close at 1pm instead of 5pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

Reductions: 18

Mitigations: Introduce further self-service facilities, enabling an overall increase in opening hours of 17 per week

Clevedon library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

Congresbury community-managed library

Changes: No change

Reductions: No change

Mitigations: None

For All Healthy Living Centre library

Changes: Close between 12.30pm and 1.30pm Tuesday – Friday.
Close all day Monday.

Reductions: 11.5

Mitigations: Explore self-service opening

Nailsea library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays.
Close at 5pm instead of 6pm on Tuesdays

Reductions: 1.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

North Somerset Studies library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 4pm on Saturdays.
Close two days per week.

Reductions: 15.5

Mitigations: Promote new opening hours.
Make alternative study space available.

Portishead library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

Weston-super-Mare library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 4pm on Saturdays.
Close at 5pm instead of 6pm on weekdays.

Reductions: 8.5

Mitigations: Explore feasibility of extending self-service hours between 5pm and 6pm daily.
Promote digital access to library and council services.

Winscombe library

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

Yatton library and children's centre

Changes: Close at 12.30pm instead of 1pm on Saturdays

Reductions: 0.5

Mitigations: Increase self-service opening hours

Annex 2. Promotion and engagement activities

Overview

This section summarises how the consultation was promoted and how stakeholders were engaged.

Briefings and meetings

- 14 public engagement sessions were held across the district
- Sessions with all ward members, Town and Parish Councils, and local MPs
- Library staff briefings and updates for volunteers
- Engagement with specialist groups, including the Disability Access Group, Young Staff Forum, and Opportunity North Somerset partnership group
- Meeting with Read Easy North Somerset
- Meeting with Winscombe Community Association
- Parish council meetings attended in person to discuss the consultation approach

Direct communications

- Emails to all North Somerset councillors, Town and Parish Council chairs and clerks, MPs, and a wide stakeholder list
- Targeted messages to LibrariesWest registered users in North Somerset (over 50,000 recipients)
- Outreach to equalities stakeholders, arts and culture organisations, Alliance Homes, and library sector support groups
- Internal communications via an all-staff webinar, Town & Parish Digest, and Disabled Staff Group updates
- Messaging to over 21,000 North Somerset residents via the North Somerset Council (NSC) app
- Email to local History and research groups

Publicity materials

- Posters, banners, and hard copies of questionnaires displayed in every library and the mobile, with supporting materials available on site
- Posters and information emailed to all ward and Town and Parish councillors to display and locally
- Copies shared at community venues such as Somewhere To Go in Weston
- Distribution through schools, children's centres, and family hubs, with officers visiting schools to support young people in completing questionnaires

Media and online promotion

- Press releases at launch and with three weeks remaining, supported by coverage including a BBC Radio Bristol interview
- Promotion through the Council's website, NSC app, and newsletters such as eLife, Town and Parish Digest, and The Knowledge (the council's internal newsletter)
- Social media activity across Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, and Bluesky, with posts from Council accounts, councillors, and Children's Services, widely shared by partner organisations and community groups
- Reminder posts and updates issued as the closing date approached

Community engagement

- Children's Services promoted the consultation through VOICE drop-ins, school outreach, and social media campaigns shared by multiple groups
- Local history and archaeology groups contacted regarding changes to the Local Studies Library
- Councillors promoted drop-in events and shared posters, FAQs, and children's surveys through newsletters and email signatures
- Equalities stakeholder group by the Inclusion and Corporate Development Officer
- North Somerset Together network monthly newsletter

Annex 3. Consultation results
(Question 4 breakdown)

Table 23 shows how respondents rated each option overall for question 4.

Table 22: Consultations results for Question 4 (overall views on Options A, B and C)

	Option A	Option B	Option C
Strongly agree	16%	19%	14%
Somewhat agree	27%	29%	27%
Neither agree nor disagree	23%	27%	27%
Somewhat disagree	11%	11%	11%
Strongly disagree	24%	15%	21%
Total responses	2,911	2,919	2,896



Annex 4. Consultation questions (Q1-Q19)

Overview

This section lists the full set of consultation questions (Q1-Q19), covering respondent capacity, library usage, impacts, ideas for reducing impacts, income generation suggestions, interest in community management, barriers to access, and demographic information.

Full question list

Table 23: Consultation questions

Question and response options

Q1 Please tell us in what capacity you are responding to this consultation (mandatory)

- Resident of North Somerset
- Live outside North Somerset
- North Somerset Council staff member
- Library volunteer
- Represent a ward/town/parish council (specify)
- Responding on behalf of a business (specify)
- Other (specify)

Q1a Please specify where (if outside North Somerset)

Free text

Q1b Please provide the name of the ward/town/parish council you represent

Free text

Q1c Please provide the name of the business you are responding on behalf of

Free text

Q1d Please specify in which capacity you are responding

Free text

Q2 Please provide the full postcode of your home address, or the organisation you are responding on behalf of

Free text

Q3a Which North Somerset library services do you currently use, if any?

List of libraries + online/home options + “none”

Q3b Roughly how often do you use these services?

- At least once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Every few months
- Once or twice a year
- Used before but not recently
- Prefer not to say

Q3c How do you usually use our library services?

- Visit during staffed hours
- Visit during unstaffed extended access
- Use online services
- Attend events/activities
- Use mobile library
- Receive books via home library
- Other (specify)

Q4 What are your overall thoughts on these proposals?

Grid: Strongly agree to Strongly disagree for Options A, B, C + free text

Q5 How might these changes affect you?

- Reduced access due to travel/transport
- Limited ability to visit during reduced hours
- Difficulty using self-service
- Lack of confidence with technology
- Disability/access need affected
- Use library space for community activities
- Concern about reduced space if hired out
- Rely on staff support
- No impact
- Other (specify)

Q6 Please tell us more about how you, your household, or your organisation may be affected

Free text

Q7 Do you have any ideas for how we could reduce the impact of these changes?

Free text

Q8 Do you have any other ideas or suggestions for how the library service could: be delivered differently, work more closely with communities, improve accessibility, reduce costs?

- Yes
- No + Free text

Q9 If your comments relate to a specific library, please tell us which one

Free text

Q10 Do you have any suggestions for how the library service could raise income? (Ideas: hire spaces, advertising, fundraising, donations, sponsorships)

Free text

Q11 Would you be interested in supporting or helping run a community-managed library at one of the sites currently at risk?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure + Contact details

Q12 Is there anything else you would like us to know about any barriers you face in using library services?

Free text

Q13 What is your age?

Age bands: Under 16 → 75+ + Prefer not to say

Q14a Fairness issues to consider (Equality Act 2010 characteristics)

Tick all that apply (Age, Disability, etc.)

Q14b Additional comments in relation to fairness considerations

Free text

Q15 Please tell us about the language(s) you speak and read

- English main
- Not English main
- Can speak English very well
- Other (specify)

Q16 What is your ethnic group?

Standard ONS categories + Prefer not to say

Q17 Do you have a physical or mental health condition lasting 12 months or more that reduces your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, a little
- No

Q18 What is your sex?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

Q19 What is your current employment status?

- Employed
- Student
- Retired
- Unemployed (looking/not looking)
- Looking after home/family
- Carer
- Armed Forces
- Prefer not to say
- Other

Annex 5. Town and parish council and ward member responses

Overview

Summaries of submissions from local councils and representatives, showing library usage, views on proposals, impacts identified, suggestions, and overall sentiment.

Abbots Leigh Parish Council

Library services used:	Pill Library and Children's Centre; weekly use by older residents, parents, childminders, nurseries, and school children; access to Wi-Fi, computers, warm room, hot drinks, phone charging
Views on proposals:	Strongly disagree with Options A and C; strongly agree with Option B
Impacts identified:	Closure would disadvantage residents; nearest alternative Portishead Library is 4.6 miles away; mobile library inadequate replacement
Suggestions/ideas:	Extend opening hours; hire out rooms; explore leasing to charities for business rate relief; work with Alliance Homes and local groups; improve bookings; engage businesses and schools
Community management:	Does not support community managed model; urges NSC to sustain service
Overall sentiment:	Strong defence of Pill Library as vital for deprived communities; Abbots Leigh willing to contribute financially via precept and fundraising

Bleadon Parish Council

Library services used:	Range of nearby libraries; mobile library (recently reduced)
Views on proposals:	Somewhat disagree with Options A, B, and C
Impacts identified:	No permanent library; no local schools; poor transport links; closures/reduced hours would severely limit access
Suggestions/ideas:	Ensure reviews reflect community needs; deliver services locally; recognise ageing population and limited digital engagement; address disadvantage for young people
Community management:	Not applicable

Overall sentiment:	Concerned proposals run contrary to community needs; stresses vulnerability of older residents and children

Churchill Parish Council

Library services used:	Winscombe Library; online services
Views on proposals:	Strongly disagree with Option A; somewhat disagree with Option B; strongly agree with Option C
Impacts identified:	Library provides warm space, prevents loneliness, supports integration, gives children access to books, offers PC access
Suggestions/ideas:	None beyond stressing importance of library as hub
Community management:	No interest
Overall sentiment:	Strong recognition of library's social value; supportive of Option C

Congresbury and Puxton Parish Council

Library services used:	Congresbury Community-managed Library; other local libraries
Views on proposals:	Supportive of community-managed model (Congresbury already operates this way successfully)
Impacts identified:	Continued reliance on Congresbury library; changes could affect frequency of use
Suggestions/ideas:	None specific; implicit support for community-run approach
Community management:	Positive — Congresbury cited as successful example
Overall sentiment:	Regular but not heavy users; supportive of community-managed model

Flax Bourton Parish Council

Library services used:	Nailsea and Clevedon Libraries; occasional use of Campus, Congresbury, Portishead, Weston, Yatton, and online
Views on proposals:	Somewhat agree with Options A – C; prefer reduced hours over closures
Impacts identified:	Concern about volunteer shortages
Suggestions/ideas:	Maximise use of council buildings; hire out unused space

Community management: No interest

Overall sentiment: Supports reduced hours; sceptical about volunteer reliance; urges better asset use

Nailsea Town Council

Library services used: Nailsea Library

Views on proposals: Unsure on Options A – C; closures should be avoided

Impacts identified: Concern about car parking charges reducing footfall

Suggestions/ideas: Encourage school children to visit; fund core services via Council Tax

Community management: No interest

Overall sentiment: Neutral on options; opposed to closures; concern about external barriers

Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council

Library services used: Winscombe Library (central to village life)

Views on proposals: Strongly backed continued NSC funding; argued usage data underestimates demand due to faulty access-system technology

Impacts identified: Library is an essential social hub reducing isolation, supporting wellbeing, promoting learning; central location boosts local shops and village vitality; limited public transport makes alternatives impractical

Suggestions/ideas: Requested early indication of NSC's decision to plan 2026-27 budget; urged recognition of library's wider social and economic value

Community management: Not explicitly addressed; emphasis placed on continued NSC funding rather than transfer

Overall sentiment: Strong defence of Winscombe Library as vital for equity, accessibility, and community wellbeing; closure or reduction seen as disproportionate and harmful

Wrington Parish Council (grouped responses)

Library services used: Multiple local libraries; weekly mobile library service in Wrington; occasional use of staffed hours and online

Views on proposals:	Opposed to closures; somewhat disagree with Options A – C; supportive of reduced hours/stock budgets and self-service if necessary
Impacts identified:	Closure of static libraries (Pill, Winscombe, Worle) would reduce mobile library hours for Wrington/Redhill; deprivation for elderly without transport; loss of access to books, digital resources, and NSC advice
Suggestions/ideas:	Support community-run libraries where possible; accept reduced hours/stock budgets and increased self-service as compromise
Community management:	Supportive in principle if community capacity exists
Overall sentiment:	Strong defence of libraries as vital resources; opposed

Pill (grouped responses: Pill Ward Member, Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council, Abbots Leigh Parish Council)

Library services used:	Pill Library and Children's Centre; weekly or monthly use; venue for councillor meetings; wide community use (childminders, schools, Guides, health services, warm room, Wi-Fi, hot drinks)
Views on proposals:	Strongly disagree with Options A and C; strongly agree with Option B
Impacts identified:	Pill West is among the most deprived areas in North Somerset; closure would disproportionately affect vulnerable residents; Portishead alternative unviable; mobile library inadequate
Suggestions/ideas:	Reduce staff hours equitably; extend hours via volunteers/Friends groups; taper changes; invest in self-access; bring in Health and Children's Services; hire out rooms; explore leasing to charities; engage businesses and schools
Community management:	Parish Council and Abbots Leigh oppose community-managed model; Ward Member supports Friends groups but stresses tapering and shared responsibility
Overall sentiment:	Pill Library seen as a flagship community hub; closure would be unjust and short-sighted; strong unified support for Option B and retention of council management

Banwell and Winscombe (ward member)

Library services used:	Winscombe Library (mainly for meetings); family use more regular; also Pill, Portishead, Weston, Worle, Yatton, and online services
Views on proposals:	Unsure on Options A – C; open to community management if supported locally
Impacts identified:	Family more affected than respondent; Winscombe library space limited
Suggestions/ideas:	Support for community management of Winscombe Library, retaining Libraries West connection
Community management:	Conditional support
Overall sentiment:	Pragmatic acceptance of savings need; cautious support for community management

Portishead East (ward member)

Library services used:	Portishead Library; online
Views on proposals:	Strongly disagree with Options A – C
Impacts identified:	Cuts seen as false economy; risk to wellbeing and community support
Suggestions/ideas:	Optimise assets; partner with councils/community groups; learn from Cornwall
Community management:	Willing to support, but framed within strategic investment
Overall sentiment:	Strong opposition to cuts; passionate defence of libraries as essential hubs

Weston South (ward member, combined responses)

Library services used:	Weston-super-Mare Library
Views on proposals:	No detailed option preferences recorded
Impacts identified:	Regular reliance on Weston Library; importance of maintaining weekly access
Suggestions/ideas:	None provided
Community management:	No clear position
Overall sentiment:	Consistent weekly use; emphasis on ongoing importance of access

Annex 6. **Children's responses**

The following pages show posters and letters submitted by children from Winscombe.

Save

Our

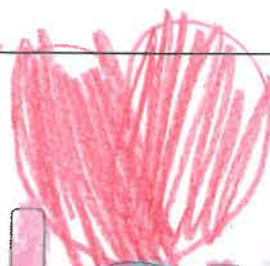
Library



We love

Our

Library



Save Our Library



Winscombe Primary School
Moorham Road
Winscombe
North Somerset
BS25 1HH
22nd October 2025

To whom it may concern,

We are writing from year 5 at Winscombe Primary School in support of the library.

The library is important to us because we can get new books there. It's the only way that we can get books for free. Some of the books help us to learn. If you buy a book online and you don't like it, you can't return it but if you borrow it from the library you can and it hasn't cost any money. The library gives us the opportunity to read books that we didn't know about.

We have really enjoyed doing the summer reading challenge. Having the library in Winscombe encourages us to read more books. The Winscombe library is a five-star library. The library is a central part to our community and it would be a real lose to the village if it were to close. For some people it would ruin their daily routine and they would be heart-broken if the library closed.

It would be a real shame for those people that will lose their jobs if the library closes. How would it make you feel if you lost your job? We think you will really regret it if you close it. If you close the library people of Winscombe and surrounding area will be devastated.

Yours sincerely,

Maple Class

Year 5

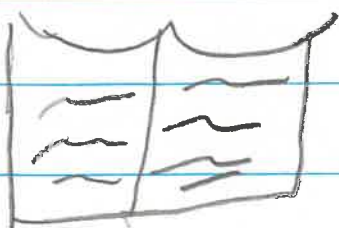
Keep The Winscombe Library Open!

!!

We believe that the Library is a very important part of our community, we know that it is a calm reliable space for people of all ages. We would be devastated to see it go and become an other unreliable convenience store! It has incredible facilities such as: various options of books, you can easily borrow books with no hassle, it's also a very calm and relaxing place to study! As well, it would be a tragedy to see our wonderful Librarians lose their jobs! Also during the summer we have our 'Summer Reading Challenge' to keep us reading throughout the holidays!

Yours Sincerely, the Winscombe Primary 'Yr 6's'

Please reconsider, we want to keep our Library!





This publication is available in large print, Braille or audio formats on request.

Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.

For all enquiries please contact
Libraries.review@n-somerset.gov.uk

North Somerset Council

Report to the Council

Date of Meeting: 24th February 2026

Subject of Report: USING COUNCIL LAND FOR BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN: DELEGATION OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT FUNCTION TO SECURE A LEGAL AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO S101 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment/Director of Environment, Assets and Transport Services

Key Decision: No

Reason:

This is not a Cabinet report and it is within the jurisdiction of Full Council to arrange for the discharge of council functions by another authority and to accept arrangements for the discharge by North Somerset Council of another council's function.

Recommendations

To make arrangements (entering into a LGA1972 S101 agreement) for *the discharge* by neighbouring authorities (Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Somerset Council, and South Gloucestershire Council), *of North Somerset Council's planning enforcement function* in so far only as it relates to enforcement of and entering into a S106 legal agreement for use of specific council-owned land as a habitat bank (e.g. biodiversity net gain (BNG) and North Somerset Nature Parks for bat mitigation).

To make arrangements (entering into a LGA1972 S101 agreement) for *the discharge by* North Somerset Council of the planning enforcement function of neighbouring authorities (Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Somerset Council, and South Gloucestershire Council) in so far only as it relates to enforcement of and entering into a S106 legal agreement for use of their land as a habitat bank.

To confirm that no arrangement for the enforcement function or acceptance of such an arrangement from/to another Council shall take effect until that other Council has made a reciprocal Council decision and shall end as between NSC and the reciprocating Council as from the date either council revokes its discharge of function arrangement, save that any actions taken under any discharge or acceptance of the enforcement function entered into before the date of revocation of the enforcement function shall remain valid.

To note that a site specific S106 agreement will need to be agreed by officers for each habitat bank and the council is under no obligation to enter into a legal agreement with the named other councils following the endorsement of the proposed arrangement by NSC.

1. Summary of Report

The reports sets out how the reciprocal arrangements for discharge of planning enforcement duties to neighbouring authorities will enable North Somerset Council to enter into S106 agreements with those authorities to secure the management of our habitat bank sites. The S106 agreements are an essential part of the registration of NSC BNG sites with Natural England and will allow the subsequent efficient and cost-effective sale of BNG units to developments within North Somerset. S106 agreements will also secure the management of North Somerset Nature Parks sites in perpetuity for the benefit of horseshoe bats and permit the sale of bat mitigation units to developments within North Somerset.

The provision of habitat banks such as our BNG sites and Nature Parks not only provides protected habitats for wildlife and supports the outcomes of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy but also supports the delivery of development in North Somerset and generates income.

2. Policy

The decision will support the delivery of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Corporate Plan commitments to both protect our natural environment and encourage biodiversity whilst enabling sustainable development and supporting the delivery of housing.

3. Details

The Environment Act 2021 introduced the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain (BNG), requiring many developments to provide at least 10% BNG either on-site, off-site or by purchasing biodiversity units. This BNG must be secured by planning condition, S106 agreement/conservation covenant or both.

The legislation requires all BNG provided outside of a development to be recorded on Natural England's BNG register with a legal agreement signed by the landowner and an organisation enforcing the legal obligations.

North Somerset Council, as landowner, can use its land for off-site habitat bank provision. However, North Somerset Council, as Local Planning Authority, cannot enter into a S106 agreement with North Somerset Council as landowner to secure this habitat bank provision because there would be a conflict of interest between its role as both provider and that of the enforcing party. The legal 'agreement' needs to be between two separate organisations.

Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows a Council to arrange for the discharge of its functions by other local authorities as long as that function, also being a function of the other authority, is not the responsibility of the other authority's executive. Subject to that exception, the function of local planning authority could therefore be delegated to another local authority for the purposes of securing, monitoring and enforcing these S106 agreements for obligations on Council land. The proposal for discharge of planning enforcement function is solely to be used for council-owned land identified for development as a BNG habitat bank or Nature Park and entering into a S106 legal agreement for the land to be secured as a biodiversity net gain or Nature Park habitat bank.

NSC seeks endorsement to enter into reciprocal arrangements for discharge of planning enforcement functions with neighbouring authorities Bath and North-East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Somerset Council, and South Gloucestershire Council) for the

purposes only of entering into a S106 legal agreement for use of specific council owned land as habitat banks.

In the absence of a mechanism for securing biodiversity units from council land, the council as a developer will be less able to offset biodiversity impacts close to the impact area. This would both result in lost opportunity for biodiversity and delivering for local people linked to the area being impacted. In addition, using council land for BNG and Nature Parks provides a funding stream for maintaining the land, subject to an agreed management plan, for 30 and 80 years respectively.

It is proposed that by having S106 agreements in place for habitat banks on NSC-owned land and therefore the ability to register these units on the Natural England register, these units can be used by NSC's own development schemes and also sold to private developers. Therefore housing delivery and other schemes requiring off-site BNG/bat mitigation units will be able to reserve and legally secure specific off-site habitat delivery to enable the discharge of planning conditions and allow the commencement of development.

In the longer term another option to secure a legal agreement may become available with the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (the MCA). The MCA have started the process of applying to become a 'responsible body' which would enable NSC to apply for a deed with a conservation covenant. This may become the preferred solution once established, but it is anticipated that the process to become a Responsible Body will be lengthy and is untested for the MCA. The process could take in excess of 12 months. Without the reciprocal arrangements proposed here it will be unviable for the council to use its land to provide BNG units because the private Responsible Bodies established so far are unaffordable for the council's BNG schemes.

Bath and North-East Somerset Council (BANES) have already approved the discharge function arrangements for enforcement duties for the purposes of managing habitat banks on BANES Council-owned land and this agreement would reciprocate this arrangement.

4. Consultation

Head of Planning Enforcement – Chris Nolan (26.11.25)

Head of EATS – Mickey Green (27.11.25)

Legal Department – Nick Brain and Ann Rich (1.12.25)

Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment – Cllr Waite (12.12.25)

PESC (16.1.26)

5. Financial Implications

There are no cost implications for the approval of this administrative process.

Whether to enter into a S106 agreement with another council for a specific site is a delegated decision to planning officers with advice from specialist officers, the likelihood of enforcement action is considered as part of the process.

All S106 agreements resulting from planning applications or otherwise carries a risk of enforcement action with associated cost. The S106 agreements for habitat banks will be between councils with a legislative biodiversity duty and therefore the risk of costs due to enforcement action is expected to be low.

The costs incurred in setting up a site as part of a council habitat bank are covered by the project and are expected to be recovered through the sale of biodiversity/Nature Park units.

The outcome will result in a new income stream to enhance and maintain council owned land for 30yrs+ (80+ for Nature Parks) contributing to Council ecological emergency objectives.

The outcome will also provide biodiversity/bat mitigation units for the council's own developments, reducing the need to purchase units from a private organisation, or outside the authority area which incurs a financial disincentive.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act) section 40 duty, provided for in the Environment Act 2021, extends the biodiversity duty on public authorities to include the enhancement of biodiversity. The use of council land as biodiversity net gain habitat banks will contribute to this duty.

The legal power to make arrangements for discharge of functions between councils arises from Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972

The Local Government Act 1972 (section 101(1)(b)) states that "...a local authority may arrange for the discharge of any of their functions – [.....] (b) by any other local authority".

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

The arrangement for discharge of planning enforcement function will enable council land to be used as a habitat bank resulting in ecological mitigation and 10% biodiversity improvement being provided within the same local authority area as the development impacting biodiversity. This approach contributes to resilience of habitats within North Somerset to climate change.

8. Risk Management

Without a S106 in place NSC is unable to sell units for developments obligated by the 10% BNG requirement, or bat mitigation units for any of its habitat banks. NSC could continue to pursue the establishment of a Habitat Banking Vehicle through alternative means however this is considerably more of an administrative burden and requires the transfer of the lease of the land to the other party at a time when devolution is taking up a considerable amount of internal resource, it is suggested that the additional requirements for the NSC habitat banks would be better dealt with by avoiding this requirement.

9. Equality Implications

An EIA has not been carried out. The discharge of a regulatory function between councils will not result in a change to the function. An indirect outcome will be that due to the location of council owned land, biodiversity will be provided closer to communities and therefore increase public access to nature.

10. Corporate Implications

There are implications for the Ecology Team, Planning Enforcement and Legal teams. The Ecology Team will need to prepare all the habitat bank specific documentation for the Legal team to be able to create a S106 draft to share with the neighbouring local authority. The Planning Enforcement Team, albeit unlikely, may need to enforce on another local authority in the future if they fail to meet the obligations within the S106.

11. Options Considered

Option 1: Pursue a Habitat Banking Vehicle solution with a third-party organisation whereby the council's habitat banks are transferred to that party in order to allow a S106 to be established between the third party as landowner and NSC as planning authority. Option rejected due to considerable management, lease and legal arrangements being necessary to achieve this. Note: this had been the route that the Natural Environment Team had been pursuing in the absence of any other viable option however as Bath and North-East Somerset Council is now ready to offer S106 agreements with other authorities, this has overtaken as the most straightforward and cost-effective option and avoids the need to transfer the land ownership.

Option 2: It is possible to enter into a conservation covenant (deed) with a private registered 'responsible body' who can then enforce the covenant. Option rejected due to high costs which would make providing units for council-owned projects unviable and funds not available to cover the upfront fees. This is also a lengthy process which would lead to further delay in being able to sell units.

Option 3: Wait and see whether WECA are successful in an application to become a responsible body. Option rejected due to no timescales available and certainty of outcome.

Option 4: Solely using private habitat banks was considered, but this option would give less control over cost, when and where units are available and doesn't provide the additional benefits of co-locating nature where communities can access it. It would also not lead to the ecological enhancement of council-owned sites which would otherwise be unaffordable. Option Rejected.

Author:

Esther Coffin-Smith, Natural Environment Manager, 01934 426513

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

None

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North Somerset Council

Report to Full Council

Date of Meeting: 24th February 2026

Subject of Report: Corporate Parenting Update

Town or Parish: N/A

Officer/Member Presenting: Councillor Catherine Gibbons

Key Decision: No

Reason:

Briefing only – no decision required.

Recommendations

None.

Summary of Report

This report summarises the Virtual School's work over the last year to improve educational engagement, attendance and outcomes for Children in Care, children who have previously been in care and children with a social worker.

1. Policy

This report sets out how the Virtual School supports North Somerset Council's statutory Corporate Parenting responsibilities. The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023-2026 sets out the 5 priority goals that ensure that the service is focused on the same goals and making the best use of the resources we must achieve the best outcomes for our Children In care and Care experienced young people. The 5 key areas include:

- Area 1 – Listening and Responding to Our Children In Care and Care Experienced Young People.
- Area 2 – Making Sure that Children in Care and Care Experienced young people have good, safe places to live with secure support.
- **Area 3 – Working to help our children in care and care experienced young people achieve the best they can in all education opportunities.**
- Area 4 – making sure children in care and care experienced young people are happy, healthy, and supported with physical and emotional well-being.
- Area 5 – Provide support to children in care and care experienced young people into independence.

This report focuses on Area 3 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy: Working to help our children in care and care experienced young people achieve the best they can in all education opportunities.

2. Details

2.1 The role of the Virtual School

As Corporate Parents, North Somerset Council champions the education, wellbeing and future life chances of Children in Care, children who have previously been in our care and children with a social worker. To fulfil this function, local authorities are required to have a 'Virtual School'. This is not a physical school but a team within the council whose job it is to champion the education of children. To do this they track the progress of children in the schools they attend; ensure that every child has a personal education plan; work with schools and other professionals to give advice, training and guidance; promote high aspirations; help schools understand the barriers to learning; support attendance and stability in school and offer extra learning opportunities.

The virtual school works with 94 education settings both inside and outside of North Somerset area as they retain responsibility for children when placed outside the local area – and are working across 23 different local authority areas.

2.2 Governance of the Virtual School

The Head of the Virtual School is required to write an annual report which is presented to the Corporate Parenting panel for scrutiny. In North Somerset the Annual Report 2024/25 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 4th November 2025. This report provides some key highlights for all members of the Council to support your role as Corporate Parents.

2.3 Achievements in 2024/25

The Virtual School remained stable and effective responding well to the increasing numbers of children in our care and the complexity of need of our children, with strong oversight keeping children engaged in education and progressing. Early intervention and close partnership with schools supported children to remain in education; supported children back into school following periods of difficulty and delivered positive outcomes across all education phases, with no permanent exclusions of children in care in 2024/25.

Schools get quick, practical help as soon as any risk to attendance or inclusion is spotted, helping them to put things right. Attendance of children in primary school is strong and we are focusing extra support this year for children in Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4) as these are the times when children are more likely to struggle and we know that these are critical years when children are undertaking qualifications and exams.

In the recent focused visit by Ofsted Focused Visit on children in care, inspectors praised the strengthened support from professionals in the virtual school which confirmed this is helping to promote children's educational attendance and achievement.

Some more detailed information is provided below:

2.3.1 Children in Care

Personal Education Plans:

The number of children in care who are of school age has increased this year to 192 (a rise of 26%), with a high proportion (72%) identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. This means they are more likely to need tailored support and stable relationships in school. Some children can experience placement moves and longer journeys and so they need consistent plans that follow them, quick access to the right help first time, and clear communication between adults so they don't have to repeat their story. The virtual school ensures that every child has a personal education plan that supports this.

Because of the training offered to teachers, carers and social workers, and use a trauma-informed approach, children get support that is calm, consistent and tailored to their needs. Quality assurance shows that personal education plans are written well, adults know their legal duties, and help is joined up,

Strong partnership working high attendance at Personal Education Plan meetings and close collaboration between schools, carers, social care and colleges, means decisions are made quickly and acted on. For children, that brings clearer plans, smoother transitions, more stable education placements and better day-to-day support, helping them attend, engage and make progress.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are written to children, not about them, using their views, goals and strengths. We showcase their artwork, photography and achievements throughout the year so their talents are visible and valued. As a result, children are listened to and in control of their plans. Their ambitions shape the support they receive. Regular recognition of their achievements builds confidence, pride and a stronger sense of belonging in school.

Attendance & Inclusion: The overall attendance of children in care in school during 2024/25 was 89.1%, with better attendance in primary school (95.3%) than attendance at secondary school (84.3%). This remains the same as 2023/24. We continue to target work to support pupils in years 10 and 11 as this is when attendance is most likely to be a challenge.

No children in care were permanently excluded from school during 2024/25. This is a real success - children are able to stay in their school, with their friends and routines intact. If a suspension from school happens, the focus is on getting them back quickly with a clear reintegration plan and the right support. Staff training and early help mean worries are spotted sooner, behaviour is understood in context, and issues are dealt with before they escalate. This leads to fewer missed lessons, more stability and confidence, and better long-term outcomes. However we are ambitious to do more to reduce this even further. The 3 year trend in suspensions shows that despite a reduction from 2023/24, this is still higher than the proportion in 2022/23.

Outcomes and progress: In the early years, most children are starting school ready to learn – with six out of seven children reaching the expected levels of development assessed through the Early Years Foundation Stage. At GCSE, more young people now achieved have the basics in English and Maths (17%, double last year), and there are standout successes including top grades, showing what's possible with the right support. After Year 11, most are gaining qualifications and moving into college or training. For children, this means better choices, smoother transitions, and growing confidence, but it also means we must keep up focused support for those who haven't yet met the basics, so they don't get left behind.

Entering adulthood

More care-experienced young people are getting the right help after Year 11. With 69 post-16 pupils supported, they have someone to guide them on courses, funding and wellbeing. Fewer are NEET (not in education, employment or training), so more are in college, apprenticeships or training, building routines, skills and qualifications.

A dedicated Post-16 Officer and stronger links with colleges make moves into post-16 smoother and problems easier to sort quickly. Better data means we spot early signs of struggle and step in, helping young people stay on their course, attend more regularly, and progress to the next level.

Impact of Pupil Premium Plus

The Head of the Virtual School manages this additional funding for children in care in order to improve educational outcomes. Pupil Premium Plus is spent where it makes the biggest difference. Children get trusted, consistent social and emotional support, targeted 1:1 and small-group teaching to plug learning gaps, and therapeutic help to manage anxiety and trauma. Focused GCSE coaching and exam preparation build confidence and exam skills. Together, this means children feel safer and more settled in school, attend and engage more, make faster progress, and go into exams prepared and less stressed.

2.3.2 Children with a Social Worker

The role of the virtual school was extended during 2024/25 beyond children in care to support all children with a social worker – working strategically to promote the education of children with a social worker – recognising that these children often experience poorer educational outcomes than their peers and need additional visibility and support. Additional responsibilities have been included to also promote educational support for children living in kinship care.

As a result of this work, more children are in school more often, attendance has risen from 66.7% to 77.7%, so they miss fewer lessons and make better progress. When worries about attendance or behaviour come up, adults act sooner to sort things out before they escalate. Each school has a named leader responsible for children with a social worker, giving a clear point of contact who follows through. Social workers are more confident to challenge and advocate, helping children get timely support, fair decisions and fewer unnecessary suspensions.

2.4 Priorities for 2025/26

The Annual Report presented to Corporate Parenting Panel set out the priorities for the academic year 2025/26. A summary is provided below:

- We will raise secondary attendance, reduce suspensions further, strengthen key education transition points from primary to secondary and from GCSEs to post 16 qualifications.
- We will keep embedding trauma-informed, child-centred practice, so staff understand how adversity affects behaviour and learning and tailor support accordingly.
- In Years 10–11 (Key Stage 4), pupils will get earlier, targeted help to stay in school and keep up with learning. Adults will step in quickly when problems start, so suspensions are reduced and the appropriate support is provided
- We continue to ensure that Personal Education Plans (PEPs) will be on time, clear and useful, so the right help arrives when it's needed.

- Children's views and ambitions will shape decisions, building confidence and a clear path to their next steps.

3. Consultation

Partnership working undertaken throughout the year with children and young people, schools, carers and professionals across education and social care. Children's voices are captured through Personal Education Plans (PEPs), which are written directly to the child and inform service priorities and practice. Regular dialogue takes place with schools, Designated Teachers, social workers and post-16 providers through PEP meetings, training events and multi-agency forums, ensuring continuous feedback and shared understanding. As this report provides an update for information only and does not propose any new policy or decisions, no formal consultation was required.

4. Financial Implications

This report is submitted to Council for information and assurance purposes only and does not give rise to any financial implications. Costs and funding are correctly reflected within the council's revenue budget.

5. Legal Powers and Implications

- Children Act 1989 (s.22(3A)) – places a statutory duty on the local authority to promote the educational achievement of Children in Care.
- Children and Families Act 2014 – requires every local authority to appoint a Virtual School Head to ensure the duty to promote educational achievement is effectively discharged.
- Children and Social Work Act 2017 – establishes statutory corporate parenting principles and extends duties to promote the educational achievement of Previously Looked After Children.

6. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from this report. The Virtual School continues to use digital systems and virtual working where appropriate to minimise travel and resource use, in line with the Council's wider environmental commitments.

7. Risk Management

There are no specific risks to escalate because of this report.

Equality Implications

This report relates to the statutory function, which is intended to address educational inequality for children and young people with lived experience of care. No adverse equality implications have been identified. The activity outlined supports the Council's Public Sector

Equality Duty by targeting support to those most at risk and monitoring outcomes to address emerging inequalities.

To note, this work supports the council's commitment to treat care experience as a protected characteristic, following the unanimous vote to pass the motion on 14th Jan 2025.

8. Corporate Implications

No decision required

9. Options Considered

No decision required

Author:

Claire Shiels
Director of Children's Services
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Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

North Somerset Corporate Parenting Strategy: Link here <https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s5063/08.1%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy>

Forward Plan

for the four-month period commencing on

1st March 2026

published on 30 January 2026



This Forward Plan gives details of decision items to be presented during the forthcoming four months.

Councillors are invited to review the items and to consider whether any of them should be referred for scrutiny or discussed with the appropriate Cabinet Member.

Cabinet (9)

Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Finance, Digital and Corporate Services - Councillor Mike Bell:

- Leadership and strategic partnerships: Devolution, West of England Combined Authority, Bristol Airport and Bristol Port, and regional collaboration
- Finance and performance: Budget setting, capital programme, risk management, data insight and performance reporting.
- Digital transformation and customer services: ICT, digital services, customer experience, revenues and benefits, and welfare provision.
- Corporate governance and people services: Legal, democratic, electoral and HR services, equality, diversity and inclusion, and corporate development
- Communications and engagement: Media relations, consultation, and community engagement.

Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Families, Skills and Lifelong Learning – Councillor Catherine Gibbons:

- Children's social care and safeguarding: Family Help, child protection, children in care and care leavers, fostering, and corporate parenting
- Education and early years: School improvement, early years provision, Virtual School, and school admissions and capital projects
- Special educational needs and inclusion: SEND services, inclusion, education welfare, and support for children out of school
- Skills and lifelong learning: Skills strategy, post-16 participation, adult learning, and youth mentoring (including Junction 21)
- Workforce and service quality: Workforce development, Children's Services Academy, quality assurance, and continuous improvement.

- **Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment – Councillor Annemieke Waite:**
- Climate and nature emergency: Climate adaptation, renewable energy, carbon reduction, ecological recovery, and flood resilience
- Planning policy and delivery: Local Plan, development control, planning enforcement, and building control
- Environmental services: Waste and recycling, street cleaning, and environmental maintenance.
- Biodiversity and green infrastructure: Strategic oversight of biodiversity and green infrastructure strategy and marine environment management
- Sustainable communities: Working with local groups on community and environmental initiatives.

Cabinet Member for Homes and Health – Councillor Jenna Ho Marris: • Housing strategy and supply: Affordable housing, homelessness prevention, and private rented sector regulation • Public health and wellbeing: Health improvement programmes, mental health and wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, and reducing inequalities • Public health protection and resilience: Strategic oversight of local health protection and emergency health response in partnership with the NHS, UKHSA and North Somerset's environmental health teams • Integrated health and care: Partnerships with NHS, localities and the Integrated Care System • Community resilience: Work with voluntary and community sector partners on health and housing outcomes

Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport – Councillor Hugh Malyan: • Transport strategy: Active travel, sustainable transport, Bus Service Improvement Plan, and rail partnerships • Highways maintenance: Road repairs, lighting, drainage, and asset management • Traffic management: Traffic Regulation Orders, safety schemes, and congestion management • Public transport and accessibility: Community transport, home-to-school travel, and inclusive transport planning • Infrastructure delivery: Delivery of transport improvements and support for growth areas.

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services – Councillor Roger Whitfield: • Adult social care and safeguarding: Protection of vulnerable adults, safeguarding partnerships, and quality assurance • Community and locality services: Social work teams, occupational therapy, and hospital discharge coordination • Mental health and wellbeing: Mental health services, commissioning, and partnership working • Reablement and support services: Reablement, technology-enabled care, brokerage, and contracts • Service transformation: Continuous improvement and integration with health partners.

Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services, Sport and Pride in Place programme – Councillor James Clayton: • Regulatory and public protection: Food safety, environmental protection, trading standards, and emergency planning • Environmental health and protection: Delivery of local environmental health services and operational response to health protection incidents in coordination with Public Health • Licensing and compliance: Alcohol, taxi and private hire licensing, entertainment and event licences, animal welfare licensing, and enforcement of related regulations to support safe and fair business practice • Sport and leisure development: Support for sports clubs, leisure facilities, and community sport partnerships; promotion of physical activity and wellbeing through sport • Pride in Place programme: Delivery of the Pride in Place programme, including improvement of public spaces, neighbourhood appearance, and community pride initiatives.

Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places and Service Transformation – Councillor Mark Canniford: • Economic growth and regeneration: Placemaking, heritage, and development of council land for housing and employment • Improving Weston-super-Mare programme: Birnbeck Pier and town centre strategy • Property and asset management: Council property, car parks, and technical services • Service transformation and efficiency: Business transformation, digital innovation, and value for money • Commercial and partnership delivery: Driving income generation and partnership working.

Cabinet Member for Culture, Community Services and Safety – Cllr Mike Solomon: • Culture and heritage: Cultural strategy, partnerships with Arts Council England and Super Culture, and creative sector support • Community safety: CCTV, community policing liaison, Public Space Protection Orders, and safety of women and girls • Leisure and recreation: Leisure centres, sport facilities, seafront activities, and the Sport and

Leisure Facilities Strategy • Parks and open spaces: Parks management, ranger services, and ecology • Libraries and community hubs: Operation and development of libraries and community buildings.

The items and the final decision taker are indicative. Decision making is subject to the Constitution.

Copies of documents listed can be obtained by contacting the officer named in the attached schedules. Other relevant documents may be submitted to the decision maker and can be requested from the named officer as they become available or may be available on the Council's website www.n-somerset.gov.uk

March 2026
1. No Cabinet or Council meeting scheduled

Meeting Date	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/ Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details

2. Cabinet Member Items and Director Key Decisions

Decision not before	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/ Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details
01/03							

Meeting Date	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details
21/04	Corporate Parenting Report		Council	No	Information only item – for completeness	Not applicable – covers all ward areas	Lynn Fields lynn.fields@n-somerset.gov.uk
21/04	Approval of the Commissioning Plan for the design and construction of a new Voyage Learning Campus Secondary Pupil Referral Unit on land at Locking Head Drove (originally listed in November 2025 and February 2026)	CY086 2023/24 – Approval to commission a review of sites to deliver this new provision CY098 2024/25 – Approval to undertake an RFQ to appoint a multi-disciplinary team to oversee RIBA stages 0-2 for the VLC at Locking Head Drove CY173 2024/25 - Contract Award for the RIBA 0-2 design of the Voyage Learning Campus (11-16 year old provision) development at Locking Head Drove, Weston super Mare	Council	No	Regular quarterly updates to the CYPS Policy and Scrutiny Committee	Terry Porter and Mike Solomon (Ward Members for Hutton and Locking) Monthly updates with Cllr Gibbons and Cllr Waite	David Peacock, Senior Project Manager Email: david.peacock@n-somerset.gov.uk
21/04	Scrutiny annual report to Council	https://n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-08/NSC%20Constitution%20-%20Part%20of%20the%20Constitution.pdf	Council	No	P&S Chairs engaged at 27NOV25 Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-chairs meeting and will be updated at 29 January 2026 meeting	N/A – affects all wards	Brent Cross, Policy and Scrutiny Senior Officer Brent.cross@n-somerset.gov.uk

Meeting Date	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details
21/04	Adoption of North Somerset and Mendip Bat SAC Supplementary Planning Document (previously listed November 2025 and February 2026)	current SPD . Decision to consult (EAT61)	Council	No	Chair of CATE would like option of informal briefing post-consultation. Informal PESC Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8 December.	Affects all wards	Esther Coffin-Smith Esther.coffin-smith@n-somerset.gov.uk
21/04	Approval to submit A38 Major Road Network improvements scheme Full Business Case to Department for Transport (DfT) (relisted – previously listed for December 2025 Cabinet and February 2026 Council)	23/24 DP 436: Acceptance of Department for Transport Full Business Case funding grant for the A38 Major Road Networks improvement scheme  DP436 FBC DfT funding v6 signed.pdf	Council	No	Scheme update given to CATES Committee in March 2025 and engagement held in July 2025 following A38 MRN DfT funding announcement. Discussion ongoing with committee lead around further engagement during development of scheme detailed design.	Ward Member engagement held in July 2025 following A38 MRN DfT funding announcement. Further ward member engagement held in December 2025 to update on development of scheme detailed design.	Contact: Rebecca Kinnersley-Fowler Rebecca.kinnersley@n-somerset.gov.uk 07385 963931
21/04	Approval and commitment to the North Somerset Ocean and Rivers Action Plan. In addition, approval for officers to update it annually and re-publish following minor updates and changes (new entry)	19 th September 2023: Minutes of Previous Meeting.pdf North Somerset Ocean and Rivers Action Plan: North Somerset Ocean and Rivers Action Plan.docx	Council	No	Engaged with chair of CATE Committee in January 2026 by email.	N/A - affects most wards.	Simon Bunn, Flood Risk Manager Simon.Bunn@n-somerset.gov.uk

Meeting Date	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/ Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details
21/04	Adult Social Services and Housing Annual Commissioning Intentions Plan 2026/27	ASC&H Commissioning Strategy 2024 - 2031 https://n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/Adult%20Social%20Services%20Commissioning%20Strategy%202024%20-2031_1.pdf ASC&H Commissioning Strategy Action Plan 2025/2026 https://n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-12/Commissioning%20Strategy%20Action%20Plan%202025-26%20updated.pdf ASC&H Commissioning Intentions Plan 2025/26 agreed at Council meeting 1st April 2025, COU107 Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 1st April, 2025, 6.00 pm North Somerset Council ASC Market Position Statement 2025/2026 https://n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-12/Market%20Position%20Statement%202025-26%20updated.pdf	Council	No	To be discussed at Adults Services and Housing Policy Panel 12 February 2026	N/A – affects all areas	Teresa Stanley Head of Strategy and Commissioning, Adult Social Care and Housing teresa.stanley@n-somerset.gov.uk

Meeting Date	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/ Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details
21/04	Update to MetroWest Phase 1b (Portishead to Bristol Railway) funding and financial profiling (new entry)	MetroWest Phase 1 Report to the Council 14th January 25 – Final MetroWest Council Report July 8th 2025 FINAL EAT139 25/26 To enact delegations for MW Phase 1	Council	No	Cabinet Member Briefings (Monthly) CATE Policy and Scrutiny Committee updates 02/12/2025; 05/02/2026	Through CATES committee Additional update meetings with ward members held as required	Contact: Natalie Gale-Sides Natalie.Gale-Sides@n-somerset.gov.uk
29/04	Budget Monitor 2025-26 Month 10 Outturn and Q3 Performance Management Update	North Somerset Corporate Plan 2024-2028 (n-somerset.gov.uk) North Somerset Risk Management Strategy: North Somerset Council Risk Management Strategy, April 2024	Cabinet	No	This is an information item. Quarterly updates to Scrutiny Committees will follow the update to the Cabinet as per the agreed business planning and risk management framework.	Not applicable - covers all ward areas	Melanie Watts Melanie.watts@n-somerset.gov.uk Jo Belbin Jo.belbin@n-somerset.gov.uk
29/04	Council change programme (previously listed for February 26)		Cabinet	No	To be confirmed – will be carried out alongside MTFP CATE panel work	Not applicable – covers all ward areas	Matt Lewis Matt.lewis@n-somerset.gov.uk
29/04	Change of Place Value of Baytree School to better match its accommodation capacity across its 2 sites (new entry)	Decision CY106 And https://n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/School%20Place%20Planning%20Strategy%20final.pdf	Cabinet – maybe solely Cabinet Member for Children's Services depending on result of consultation.	No	Updates to the CYPS School Organisation Steering Group – most recently reviewed on 16 December 2025, with further update to be provided on 30 th January 2026	Cllr Shopland and Cllrs Crew and Malyan	Georgia Humphrey Georgia.Humphrey@n-somerset.gov.uk

2. Cabinet Member Items and Director Key Decisions

Decision not before	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/ Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details
01/04							

May 2026

1. Council (NB no Cabinet Meeting)

Meeting Date	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/ Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details
12/05	Corporate Parenting Report		Council	No	Information only item – for completeness	Not applicable – covers all ward areas	Lynn Fields Lynn.fields@n-somerset.gov.uk

2. Cabinet Member Items and Director Key Decisions

Decision not before	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details
01/05	Change of Place Value of Baytree School to better match its accommodation capacity across its 2 sites	Decision CY106 And https://n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/School%20Place%20Planning%20Strategy%20final.pdf	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Families and Lifelong Learning – Cllr Gibbons	No	Updates to the CYPS School Organisation Steering Group – most recently reviewed on 16 December 2025	Cllr Shopland and Cllrs Crew and Malyan	Georgia Humphrey Georgia.Humphrey@n-somerset.gov.uk

June 2026

1. Cabinet (NB no Council Meeting)

Meeting Date	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details
17/06	Council change programme – update		Cabinet	No	CATE Scrutiny activity to be determined	N/A – affects all ward	Matt Lewis – Director of Corporate Services and Transformation Matt.lewis@n-somerset.gov.uk
17/06	Budget Monitor – Month 12 outturn		Cabinet	No		N/A - affects all wards	Mel Watts Melanie.watts@n-somerset.gov.uk
17/06	Three yearly review of Public Space Protection Orders – decision as to which ones to renew, revoke or implement (new entry)		Cabinet	No	PESC Committee 13 November 2025	Consultation Spring 2026	Dee Mawn Dee.mawn@n-somerset.gov.uk

Page 665

2. Cabinet Member Items and Director Key Decisions

Decision not before	Item/Issue requiring decision	Background Documents for Consideration	Decision Taker	Exempt Item? Yes/No/ Part	Policy & Scrutiny Panel Activity & Engagement / Timeline	Ward Member Engagement	Contact Officer for Further Details
01/06							