APPENDIX

1) Introduction

The purpose of this report is to summarise the results of the recent council consultation on proposed changes to the Library Service. The report covers:

- the consultation process itself

- the feedback received

- a summary of the feedback as it relates to the revised proposal put to Cabinet on February 8th 2011

The report should be read alongside the Equality Impact Assessment for the recommended Option C (Appendix I) which has been informed by all inputs to date.

2) Background

The Isle of Wight Council faces significant challenges to its finances. Over the next four years the council needs to save at least £32 million.

Even before the current scale of the required savings become apparent, it was intended that a review be conducted of the Library Service. To this end, surveys were undertaken during the summer of 2010, to ascertain what users and non-users thought of the service. The current pattern of library provision is a product of historic development, and does not necessarily match current needs. Population patterns have changed, as have shopping and travel habits.

Not all library buildings are suited to the demands of a modern library service, and due to changing housing development, some are no longer located in the best place within the community they serve. Some towns receive a only few hours of mobile library provision, while other, smaller villagers receive several days' service from a static library.

However, the current consultation was conducted in the context of the significant reductions to the Council budget, in which £17 million needs to be saved in the year 2011/12. In December 2010, a delegated decision authorised the consultation, based on proposals in a document called "The New Chapter". This proposed a significant reduction in Council-run facilities, with the majority of libraries offered up to voluntary and community groups to staff and manage, albeit with Council Library Service support. The proposed reconfiguration was structured as follows:

- Libraries Extra: Two Council-run libraries in Newport and Ryde, opening six days a week.

- Libraries Local: Five libraries – Bembridge, Brighstone, East Cowes, Niton, Shanklin - would close on March 31st 2011, and community groups would be invited to take over the running of services in these areas. Four further libraries - in Cowes, Freshwater, Sandown and Ventnor - would open for one day a week for one year only, in order to ease the transition to community management.

- Libraries Direct: A continuation of the existing mobile library service, delivering services to places without a static library.

- Libraries Home: A continuation of the existing library service providing library services to people unable to leave their homes.

- Libraries Online: A continuation of the existing provision of online access to reference works, language courses, audio books etc.

Once the proposals were published, a consultation process was held between January 4th and February 7th.

3) Consultation Methodology

Since potentially everyone living on the Island would be affected by the proposal, it was impossible to directly target everyone in the affected group. The consultation was publicised on the Council website, though libraries and local media. Town and parish councils and various local groups - including library campaign groups - also publicised it themselves, and it is clear from the responses that information was also spread by word of mouth.

a) **The New Chapter consultation document**
The New Chapter document was available online, and also available in hard copy through all libraries. People were encouraged to write comments on a supplied form and send them to Library Headquarters for analysis. All forms were analysed as they were received.

b) Libraries Plus Review email

An email address had been established for people to send their views about the Library Service. This email address remained active throughout the consultation period, and all emails were analysed as they were received.

c) Letters to Cabinet members and Elected Members

Many residents chose to send their responses direct to their local councillor or to a Cabinet member instead. When these were subsequently forwarded to Library HQ via email or hard copy, they have been included in the analysis.

d) Public meetings

Several town and parish councils chose to hold public meetings about the future of their local library. Since these were not organised by the Council, these meetings were not counted as part of the consultation process, except when they resulted in formal responses sent through the above consultation channels. Many people attending these meetings then took the opportunity to respond through the above methods, and therefore were included in the analysis.

e) Petitions

Several petitions were handed in. Although the numbers of people signing have been recorded, these petitions cannot be included in the in-depth analysis of results reported below, since only names and addresses were recorded, rather than detailed opinions. However, their existence is indicative of the strong feeling that this consultation process elicited.

f) Number of responses

828 paper responses were sent to Library Headquarters, along with 309 emails. In addition, a large number of emails and letters were sent to Cabinet Members or individual Elected Members of the Council, 367 of which have been forwarded to Library Headquarters to date. Opinion was also expressed through public meetings and petitions. All responses were analysed as they were received, enabling an interim analysis as soon as possible after the closing of the consultation on February 7th. Although not all responses sent to Members have been forwarded onwards for analysis, this is unlikely to affect the overall pattern of the responses, or the percentage distribution of the different points of view.

g) Feedback about the consultation process itself

35 correspondents thought that the consultation process was a "sham" and that no-one had any intention of reading the responses: "The Council does not even intend to listen to the views which it has sought."

Some concern was expressed over the fact that hard copy versions of the consultation document were not available in large numbers in libraries at the start of the consultation period. Photocopies were, however, available in all libraries, copies were printed off for anyone who asked, and the document was available online - although this in itself caused

some criticism from people who pointed out that a large number of Island residents did not possess computers at home, or lacked the skills to use them.

The consultation document itself was criticised for not including detailed statistics about the performance of each library or detailed costings about how the savings would be made. Some people assumed that because this information was not included in the document, the statistics did not exist. In fact, the consultation document was informed by a large amount of statistical analysis and by detailed and rigorous costings. Detailed statistics about the costs and performance of each library were passed on to any individual or group who expressed an interest in taking over the running of a community library.

There was also scepticism expressed about the timescale, prompted by the fact that the proposals involved some libraries closing less than two months after the end of the consultation period. Doubts were expressed that the analysis could be completed in time. In fact, responses were analysed upon receipt, so even before February 7th, a large and growing database of responses had been created.

4) Feedback

For the purposes of this report and in the interests of ensuring that the fullest possible information is available to councillors who will be making decisions regarding the proposal, all feedback has been reviewed and the main themes are drawn out below, where possible using direct quotes. This feedback is also used to inform the Equality Impact Assessment attached.

1504 responses were analysed. Of these, 1490 - all but 14 - were entirely opposed to the proposals. Of those 14, only half gave the proposal unqualified support. The others gave only qualified approval, saying that they would prefer not to see any libraries close, but if budget pressures meant that closures were inevitable, they felt the "New Chapter" plan offered the best chance of maintaining coverage for as many as possible.

The rest of this section outlines the reasons the remaining 1492 respondents gave for their opposition.

a)   Impact on communities

By far the most common point raised was that of local need. 44.7% of all respondents (673 people) argued that their local library was not just a room full of books, but the hub of their community, vital to the well-being of their town or village. The library was cited as a place for social contact, a notice board for local events, and a venue for events for all ages, such as baby Rhyme Times and Health Walks. In the words of one respondent: "This is the most destructive action the Isle of Wight Council could inflict on local communities."

The argument of local need was particularly strong in West Wight (195 responses - 13% of the whole), Ventnor (8% of all responses) and the Bay Area (5% of all responses.) A child from Freshwater wrote, "[this] will lead to the destruction of the community," while a Ventnor resident wrote, "Don't tear part of the soul out of Ventnor, because it needs its library."

Several respondents also believed that the closure of the local library would have a negative economic impact in their town or village, as people lost a reason to travel to their local town

centre, and instead went to Newport or Ryde. "I fear that the loss of the facility in towns and villages will cause some small shops to close and that that in turn will have a knock on effect."

i. Geographical inequality: 10.4% of respondents made special reference to the geographical inequality of the proposals, by which people living in Newport and Ryde were perceived to be able to benefit from a much better service than people living elsewhere. As with general arguments of local need, this point was made most strongly in West Wight and Ventnor, both of which were seen to be "the poor relation" on the Island, suffering from limited services and transport links. 5.5% specifically referred to the fact that everyone pays Council tax, but residents living outside Newport or Ryde could be asked to pay an additional charge in the form of their precept in order to maintain a service that the residents of Newport and Ryde were getting anyway.

ii. Bus fares, bus timetables and other transport issues: 20.9% of respondents mentioned the high cost of bus fares, the limits of the bus timetables, and other transport issues, such as the cost of petrol and parking, road congestion, and the ecological impact of increased journeys. Most of these respondents said that they would be unwilling - and often unable - to make the journey to Newport or Ryde in order to access a "proper" library: "It would cost me £9.00 return on the bus to get to Newport, so I simply will not be able to use the library at all, as the bus fare is unaffordable." This point was made most strongly in West Wight and Ventnor, but was also made by residents across the Island. Several older respondents also pointed out the difficulties of carrying heavy books to a distant bus stop, and the limitations that this would impose on the number that could be borrowed. "If I had to go to Newport, it would take me over two hours to obtain two books - impossible!"

b) Impact on individuals

Although the most common argument made was about the impact on communities, the impact on individuals was implicit throughout the consultation. Respondents often expressed intense emotion when they described the impact the closure of their local library would have on their life. This was particularly prevalent amongst elderly people and parents with young children. "For me this is heart-wrenching." "As a mum with a child of two the library is such a lifeline." "I am 87 years and crippled with arthritis and it's the only thing that keeps me going." Access to books was valued highly, but equal emphasis was placed on social contact, children's events, learning courses and contact with library staff.

c) "Libraries Local"

Over half of the responses ignored the "Library Local" concept of community-run libraries altogether, and wrote as if the only options were a Council-run library, or total closure. This was particularly so in the case of letters and emails sent to Elected Members, the majority of which objected in very strong terms to the closure of their local library.

However, many respondents did address the "Library Local" concept of community-run libraries. 382 respondents (25.4% of the total) showed scepticism about the concept, calling it

"wishful thinking," and "just an idea." Many of these were opposed to the ethics of replacing paid staff with unpaid volunteers, and considered the idea "an insult" to professional librarians. Many respondents, including some with experience of working in libraries on the mainland, pointed out that running a library was a complex job, and expressed doubts that any group of volunteers would be able to do it at all, let alone to the standard of trained, professional staff. "Libraries Local are a ludicrous idea," one respondent wrote. "Having worked in a library, I can't see that community groups will have the least notion of what is required, or the time to devote to it."

Respondents also doubted the longevity of the project, fearing that it would be impossible to recruit sufficient volunteers after the first rush of interest died down. Questions were asked about who was going to provide training and support, and about the funding of CRB checks etc. The idea - mentioned in the consultation document - that "Libraries Local" could be housed in venues such as pubs was particularly attacked, on the grounds that this was in appropriate for children and potentially intimidating for others.

i) Experienced staff

Even amongst respondents who did not specifically express scepticism about community libraries, there was strong support for the existing staff. 13.9% of the responses - while not specifically addressing the issue of volunteers - expressed loyalty to their local members of staff, and said how important it was that the library was staffed by experienced, trained professionals, whose knowledge of their stock and their customers allowed them to make recommendations, answer complex queries, and hold events. "The loss of expertise from the people who currently run the library will be greatly felt."

d) Impact on specific groups

11.9% of respondents asserted that the proposal would affect the most vulnerable members of society hardest. Concern was particularly centred on elderly people with limited mobility, many of whom use the library as a vital point of social contact; people on low incomes, who are unable to afford books, computer access or bus fares; people suffering from rural isolation; and families with young children. "Closing libraries would hit the old, young and the poor - in other words, those who haven't got a voice."

i) Children's educational achievement

16.9% of respondents expressed concerns about the level of school results on the Island, and were of the opinion that any reduction in library service coverage would reduce achievement further: "Isle of Wight educational results are lagging behind the average and we need to increase the use of libraries, not reduce it." Home educating families pointed out that they depend on the library for access to educational books. Several school children wrote to say that they depended on the library for their studies: "Basically if I fail my GCSEs, I will blame this proposal. Local libraries are the most valuable source of reading and learning material available."

ii) Concern for young children

In addition to the above, 11% of respondents expressed general concern for children, pointing out that the library allows families to borrow a wide range of children's books, and holds events such as storytimes and rhyme times for babies and toddlers. "[My 15 month-old daughter] enjoys looking at all the books and sharing books with me and is developing a love of books. We also attend the rhyme time sessions which provides my daughter with additional vital access to language."

iii) Computer ownership

15.6% of the respondents pointed out that the Island has an unusually high proportion of people who do not possess the internet at home, or lack the skills to use it: "The powers that be do not seem to realise that not everyone is online." With the government and Council putting an increasing amount of information solely online, there were concerns that any reduction of the library service would result in an increase in the "digital divide" between those with access to the internet and those without.

Many of these respondents relied upon the computers in the library for their internet access, and some had made use of the free courses provided by library staff. "In this day and age when access to the internet and computer literacy is a "must," it is dreadful that people will be denied this." This also caused a degree of hostility to the "Libraries Online" idea, since many respondents did not realise that these services were already in place as an extension of current library provision, and thought they were new services intended to replace physical libraries.

iv) Information for unemployed people

18 respondents specifically drew attention to the role the library plays in providing information and computer access for people seeking work, pointing out that many job opportunities are only available online. "[Unemployed people] have an obligation to search online for work. When that facility is denied them how are they to fulfil their part of the contract they have in exchange for benefits?"

v) Lifelong learning

The role as of the library as a place of learning was a strong sub-text through many of the replies. 45 respondents - 3% of the total - specifically mentioned the role the library had played in their own education - "I gained a degree through the Open University a few years ago and the library was an invaluable resource" - or mentioned the courses currently run in library buildings, either by library staff or by other learning providers. "I have just got the internet thanks to a course at Shanklin Library," one respondent wrote. "Without this opportunity, I wouldn't have had the courage to do it."

e) Other points raised

i) Special collections

15 respondents expressed concern about the future of the Music Library in Ventnor Library. If this amenity were lost, wrote a member of the Isle of Wight Symphony Orchestra, "the procurement of music otherwise will cost us about an extra £2000 per year." 12 respondents expressed similar concern about the Maritime Collection, housed in Cowes Library:

ii) Mobile libraries

Although welcoming the use of a mobile library in small rural locations, 4.2% of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with any idea that a mobile library could replace a static library building, pointing out the relatively limited time allowed for visits, the limited size of stock, and restrictions on the number of people the vehicle could accommodate at any one time. Several respondents erroneously believed that fuel and running costs had not been taken into account in the calculations of savings.

iii) Newport and Ryde

Very few comments were received that specifically related to Newport or Ryde Libraries, but seven people were opposed to the loss of Sunday opening - "Sunday opening is particularly important for families where both parents work" - and three opposed plans to introduce a café, on the grounds that it would take away space from books, and adversely affect other local cafes.

iv) Legal challenge

63 respondents - 4.3% of the total - were of the opinion that the proposal was contrary to the 1964 Libraries and Museums Act, which requires all Local Authorities to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. Neither "comprehensive" nor "efficient" were defined in the act. Several respondents stated their intention of writing to the Secretary of State of the DCMS to urge him to intervene, but the decision to intervene rests with the DCMS.

f) Suggestions of alternatives

Some respondents suggested alternatives to the proposals to reduce the number of Council-run libraries.

i) Charging for books or the internet

65 people suggested charging for the loan of books. However, this is illegal according to the 1964 Libraries and Museums Act. Several suggested charging for the internet, but when this was attempted a few years ago, it brought in a negligible amount of money, due to reduced usage and the need to purchase expensive "re-seller" licences. A far higher number of people stressed the benefits provided by free internet access.

ii) Making cuts at County Hall

8% of respondents want all the cuts to be made at County Hall, without touching front-line services. Many of these wanted the number of "highly-paid managers" reduced, despite the fact that local media had already announced that this was already happening, and a large number questioned the need for the "refurbishment" of County Hall.

iii) Making the Library Service more efficient

Some people had ideas for making the Library Service more efficient, but these were generally based on misunderstandings of processes. A few people suggested that the Library Service should start seeking discounts on cover prices, but the service is already part of a consortium that is able to negotiate the best possible prices. Several people thought that the Library Service could "stop funding school libraries," even though this is not done; the School Library Service, which supports teaching in schools, is entirely paid for by school subscriptions. The Island's Library Service has already reduced its back-office functions to a level that audited figures show to be one of the cheapest and most efficient in the country, and additional savings in this area have been included in the current proposal.

iv) Reduced opening hours

2.2% of respondents suggested that their local library should reduce its opening hours for a few days, as an alternative to closure: " Instead of closing, open at least 3 days a week - or 4 or 5 half days."

v) Co-location

1.4% of respondents argued that, instead of closing, the library should join with other threatened public services - youth clubs, public toilets, tourist information centres etc. - in one local hub, perhaps with a café to raise income.

5) Conclusions

The consultation period concluded on February 7th 2011, but since responses were being analysed as they were received, interim conclusions were evident before the end of this period. Since most respondents made broadly similar points, these interim conclusions did not differ in any significant way from the final results. The ongoing consultation was therefore able to inform the revised proposal for the future of the Library Service, which was announced to Cabinet on February 8th 2011, as well as the recommendations of the offer to community groups

The consultation was therefore undertaken on a proposal which is no longer current. It is clear from the consultation that the significant majority of respondents will not be satisfied with

anything less than the retention of the status quo, but this is not possible within the current financial circumstances. However, the main messages of the consultation process have been addressed in the revised proposal as far as is possible within the financial limits.

a) Geographic areas of need

The consultation highlighted that a large number of people see their local library as vital to the well-being of their local community. This was particularly the case in West Wight, Ventnor, and to a slightly lesser extent, the Bay Area, where respondents drew attention to the infrequency and expense of bus routes, and the long distance from the Council-run libraries in Newport or Ryde. Several respondents said that they could accept the need for some library closures, but felt that it was wrong that only the east and centre of the Island would retain and Council-run library, without additional provision in the west and the south.

The revised proposal, which keeps Council-run facilities in Cowes, Freshwater, Sandown and Ventnor, therefore goes some way towards addressing the concerns of these respondents.

b) "Libraries Local"

Scepticism was expressed by many correspondents, about the viability of community-run libraries, with additional concern caused by the short timescale proposed for setting them up. Concern was raised by the original suggestion that community groups could have to find their own venue, and many respondents asked questions about how volunteers would be trained and how the "Library Local" would be supported.

The revised proposal has responded to many of these concerns.

- Four more libraries would be kept under Council control, meaning that five smaller libraries will be offered to community groups, rather than nine, as before. This means that library professionals would be able to offer more support and training to community groups during the set-up process.

- These five libraries will remain open for an additional three months, in order to give community groups longer to cement their plans.

- In these five locations, the existing library building will be offered to community groups, with a full repairing lease, to make it more likely that existing levels of service will be maintained.

- Community groups wishing to take over the running of a library will be offered computers, so public internet access can be maintained in towns and villages that currently have it.

- The Council will continue to fund the Summer Reading Challenge in community libraries, which has a proven effect in improving children's literacy levels during the summer holidays.

While the decision to bid to run a community library rests with the local community groups, these measures make community-run libraries a more attractive option, and maximise their chances of success.

c) Computer ownership

A frequent theme of the consultation was that internet access was seen as a vital part of the library service, with many respondents stating that they depended on the library for access to the increasing amount of information that is only found online. The revised proposal addresses this need, by keeping four more libraries open under Council management, and by offering community libraries computers and assistance with the provision of internet access.

d) Children

A large number of respondents were concerned about the educational standards of school children, and about the loss of facilities for children in general. By keeping four more libraries open under Council management, more children would be guaranteed access to a static library. 82% of current usage goes through the six libraries that would remain. All libraries, including community-run libraries, would continue to offer the Summer Reading Challenge, which will be funded by the Library Service.

e) Events and lifelong learning

The results of the consultation show that library users value the events and courses that are held in the Island's libraries. The full range of current events will still take place in Newport and Ryde, and with four more libraries open for three days a week, events would still be held there. Training will be offered to volunteers in community-run libraries, allowing them to host such events if they wish to, and outreach work in the shape of visits to pre-schools, community groups, schools etc. will still take place.

Equality Impact Assessment Form

Revised September 2010

Part 1   Aims & implementation of the service, policy, procedure, practice or project
This section is the title of what is being assessed, responsible officers, purpose, where it fits within the council's wider aims and how it supports the legislation to eliminate unlawful discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities.

1.1   What is being assessed

This Equality Impact Assessment examines the provision of a revised library service model in which six libraries would be directly managed by the Council's Culture and Partnership development section. These would be supported by community-run libraries, in line with the requirements of the Council's transformation agenda. The six libraries that would remain under the direct management of the Council are Lord Louis Library, Newport, and Ryde Library (which will be open six days (50 hours) and five days (42 hours) respectively, approximately the same as now) and Cowes, Freshwater, Sandown and Ventnor libraries, which would be open 21 hours a week (around 60% of their current hours). The possibility exists that these hours could be extended with community involvement. The other five libraries - Bembridge, Brighstone, East Cowes, Niton and Shanklin - which the Council was due to cease funding on March 31st 2011, would remain open for an additional three months to allow community groups more time to cement any plans to take them over.

This assessment was carried out in February 2011, following the closing of the public consultation undertaken between January 4th and Febuary 7th, and has been informed throughout by the results of this consultation. At the time of writing, the model outlined above remains a proposal, for decision at the Cabinet meeting on March 1st. Depending on that decision, a further Equalities Impact Assessment might be undertaken.

1.2   Officer(s) and section or service responsible for completing the assessment

Rob Jones Libraries Officer

Elspeth Jackson, Andrew Walker and John English Development Librarians

1.3   What is the main purpose or aims of the service, policy, procedure, practice or project

There is a statutory requirement for local authorities to provide a public library service. According to the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act, "It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof." This includes those "whose residence or place of work is within the library area of the authority or who are undergoing full-time education within that area". However, there is no clear definition of what constitutes "comprehensive and efficient."

The Act requires that local authorities:

- Provide adequate stocks in sufficient number, range and quality to meet the borrowing and reference needs of adults and children

- Actively encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service

- Provide advice to users of the service

- Provide access to stock from other authorities

Libraries play an important role in developing the literacy skills of children and adults. Public libraries were chosen by government to deliver the People's Network, which ensures that everyone has free and equal access to the internet and all the opportunities that it provides. The current Minister for Culture has said recently, "At times of economic challenge people need the library service more than ever. Libraries help people to return to work, help them to access learning and entertainment and can also help build community cohesion."

The aim of this assessment is to ensure that the needs of all groups of users are considered equally, within the climate of significantly reduced budget.

1.4 Who is affected by the service, policy, procedure, practice or project? Who is it intended to benefit and how?

The main stakeholders are residents and visitors using the facilities.

Other stakeholders include schools, Early Years settings, and other bodies that aim to increase the achievement and literacy skills of children; providers of adult learning; local Health providers, who partner with the Library Service in a variety of projects; and the prison, whose library services and education services are supported by the Island's Library Service under a separately-funded Service Level Agreement.

1.5 Has the service, policy, procedure, practice or project been promoted or explained to those it might affect directly or indirectly?

Following the publication of the delegated decision to consult on the future of the Library Service in December 2010, a public consultation was held, based around a series of proposals. The proposals document was called "The New Chapter" and it outlined a model for the future shape of the service. 828 paper consultation responses were sent to Library Headquarters, along with 309 emails. In addition, a large number of emails and letters were sent to Cabinet Members or individual Elected Members of the Council, 367 of which have been forwarded to Library Headquarters to date, making a total of 1504 responses. Opinion was also expressed through public meetings and petitions organised by local councils or campaign groups. All responses were analysed as they were received, meaning that an interim analysis was possible even before the closing of the consultation on February 7th, and that a full analysis could be completely shortly afterwards. On February 8th, a revised model, informed by the key messages from the consultation, was proposed at Cabinet. It is this proposal which this Equality Impact Assessment examines, because it features as an option in the forthcoming Cabinet Paper that will decide the Council's library service policy for the foreseeable future.

1.6 How does the service, policy, procedure, practice or project contribute to better community cohesion?

Libraries provide neutral spaces which are free for everyone to use, while the People's Network allows everyone to participate in digital citizenship, which is particularly important given the relatively low level of computer ownership on the Isle of Wight - something brought out clearly by the consultation. Many community groups consider their local library to be an important partner, and use it as a venue or to communicate with the community. Several regular library events have been evaluated according to the Government's Generic Social Outcomes, and have been demonstrated to help create a sense of community and to combat feelings of isolation. The consultation responses received during January/February 2011 supported this. The single most common point raised was that the library was not just "a room full of books," but the hub of the community - a place for important social contact, and notice

board for local events, and a venue for events for all ages.

This proposal being assessed includes the retention of six Council-run libraries. Should the local community desire it, it is possible that the hours at these libraries could be expanded and that there would be opportunities for volunteers to work alongside paid staff, so the current contribution by these libraries to community cohesion could be enhanced. This will especially be the case if Option C is chosen, since this allows for the formation of local groups, such as a "Friends of…. Library" group. (These groups are hereafter referred to for convenience as "a management group", although local communities may choose to run this group a different way). These groups will be given control of a delegated budget and allowed to allocate resources within these Council-run libraries, based on local needs and preferences. This will empower local people to work together to make decisions that affect their local community, and will ensure that library services genuinely meet local need.

When a thriving network of community-run libraries becomes established in areas without a Council-run library, many elements of this community role will be enhanced, since there will be additional opportunities for volunteering and for community-led decisions. However, feedback from other library authorities who have worked with community groups in the establishment of community-run libraries indicates that the process is not a quick one, and that a considerable amount of professional advice and guidance is required during this process and beyond, if the network is to be properly established and maintained.

In the revised proposal for the Library Service, announced in February 2011, the five libraries that will be offered to the community would remain open with paid Council staffing for three months longer than initially planned, in order to allow extra time for the network of community-run libraries to be established. Additionally, the initial offer to community groups has been significantly modified in response to feedback, in order to ensure the maximum possible chance of success. Community groups will now be able to take over existing library buildings, with a full repairing lease on preferential terms, and will be offered computers and stock. If Option C is selected, the community will be invited to form a "management group" to make collective local decisions about the allocation of resources, which will ensure that any community library genuinely reflects the needs of their community, potentially even more than at present.

To date, Expressions of Interest have been received from ten different groups interested in running a community-run library. Several of these have come from places that do not currently have a Council-run library, so it is possible that the coverage of the service will increase, and the benefits of a static library extended to communities that do not currently possess one.

Should it prove impossible to establish a functional community-run library in an area that currently has a Council-run service, an additional Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken to inform appropriate action. Service coverage will still be maintained with mobile libraries and targeted outreach work.

Additionally, measures have been put in place to ensure that any community-run facility considers the needs of all sections of their community.

1.7   How does the service, policy, procedure, practice or project fit in with the council's wider aims?

The Library Service currently contributes to the following corporate outcomes:-

- Raising the achievement of children and young people

- Supporting vulnerable people

- Improving emotional health

- Enhancing the Council's reputation; the Library Service is consistently one of the highest regarded

Council services

- Improving performance and value for money

Community led libraries in different locations may have completely different set of outcomes to those described depending on the needs of their community.

1.8 **What is the relevance of the aims of the service, policy, procedure, practice or project to the equality target group and the council's duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity?**

A public Library Service is a universal service, predicated upon equal access to all, regardless of their economic background. A Mobile Library Service visits rural locations that are not in easy reach of a library building, and the Home Library Service provides library services for people unable to leave their homes. Both of these will continue.

If service points were significantly reduced, and not replaced with mobile stops or community-run libraries, equal access would not be provided for those who for whatever reason are unable to travel. The Isle of Wight has a low level of car ownership, and in the consultation carried out during January and February 2011, the issue of public transport was the third most common point raised.

However, it is now proposed that six Council-run libraries could remain. These six are in areas identified as containing the highest levels of deprivation on the island. Additionally, these six sites currently account for 82% of all library usage. Although some areas will no longer have a Council-run library, the location of the remaining sites will ensure that access to the service is as equal as possible, while working within the financial pressures that face the Council. In the consultation responses, the areas mentioned most often as having particular issues with transport and isolation were Ventnor and West Wight, both of which would now be retaining their Council-run library. If Option C is selected, residents in all these areas will be additionally be empowered to participate in local decision-making about the shape of their local library provision, which will potentially highlight local needs that are not currently being met, and allow them to be reflected in the shape of the service. This will allow local people to assume roles of responsibility, which will develop their own skills and opportunities.

There will still remain areas that will lose their current Council-run library, so there is a risk that access will become less equitable than it is at present. However, the development of a thriving network of community-run libraries will mitigate this negative effect, and has the potential to transform it into a positive one, since community-run libraries could be more responsive to local needs than the present facilities, and might be located in some areas that do not currently have a library. Since December 2010, a number of measures have been put in place to maximise the chances of success of these community libraries, as outlined in point 1.6 above. If Option C is chosen, control of budgets will be delegated to local communities, which will result in community-run libraries more closely reflecting local needs than the current provision.

In areas where a community-run library is slow to develop, or does not develop at all, library services will still be provided through a Mobile Library stop or targeted outreach work.

Additionally, measures have been put in place to ensure that any community-run service promotes equality of opportunity for all potential users.

1.9   How is, or how will the service, policy, procedure, practice or project be put into practice and who is responsible for it?

The services are provided by, and directly managed by the Council's Library Service which forms part of the Community Well-being and Social Care directorate.

Any community-run library that results from the review will be managed by representatives of the local community. Before accepting any offer to run a community library, the Council will ensure that appropriate governance procedures are in place as well as quality assurance, so that the services are compliant with equality law. These new community libraries will be based around outcome based commissioning ensuring equality and access. If Option C is chosen, local "management groups" will be formed to allow local people to be involved with and take responsibility for decisions that affect their local community.

Part 2 Consideration of data and research

To conduct the assessment, you will need information about service users and staff that provide the service. This section is to help you identify the sort of information that will be needed to help you assess whether there may be barriers to different equality groups who access your service, policy, procedure, practice or project.

2.1   List all examples of quantitative and qualitative data or any consultation information available that will enable the impact assessment to be undertaken

The following information has been used to inform this impact assessment:

- Member usage data held on Library Management System
- Mosaic and Acorn profiles
- Demographic intelligence supplied by Information Observatory
- Face to face, paper and online survey results, including social impact measures
- Service satisfaction scores
- Cipfa Surveys
- The "New Chapter" consultation undertaken in January and February 2011

2.2   Equalities profile of users and beneficiaries

The Library Management System records the following data on library users who possess library cards, although some of this data is optional and not provided by all:

- Sex
- Age
- Disability (where supplied)
- Ethnicity (where supplied)

Information on the religious beliefs, sexual orientation or gender reassignment is not recorded. Although data on pregnancy/maternity is not recorded, the Library Service specifically targets the families with babies through various partners, including Health Visitors, Children's Centres and Registrars, and libraries are labelled as breast feeding friendly.

2.3 **Evidence of complaints against the service, policy, procedure, practice or project on the grounds of discrimination**

The Library Service received a complaint from a customer in 2004 regarding staff attitudes to gender reassignment. This was resolved. Two complaints have been received regarding access to services. One was resolved by the relocation of a collection, while the other was resolved by the construction of a ramp whilst building work was in process at Newport Bus Station, adjacent to Newport Library.

The service is very aware of such issues and brings building matters to Property Services and makes changes to service delivery where appropriate.   It is the intention of the service to reflect the needs of a wide variety of users in the development of services and collections.

During the consultation process in January and February 2011, a number of respondents believed that the proposals would hit the most vulnerable members of society hardest - e.g. those unable to travel, those on low incomes, those without computer at home. The revisions made to the original "New Chapter" proposal have taken these comments into account.

2.4 **What does the consultation, research and/or data indicate about the negative impact on the service, policy, procedure, practice or project**

During the consultation process undertaken in January and February 2011, a large number of respondents (1490 out 1504) were opposed to the plans outlined in "A New Chapter", although some were in support a slight reduction of the number of branches, or a reduction in opening hours. The most common reasons for objecting were, in order:

- Community need (44.7% of responses): The library was seen as "the hub of the community," vital to all ages. There was a particularly strong feeling that the Bay Area, West Wight and Ventnor required a library of their own. In Freshwater and Ventnor in particular, concern was expressed that closing the library would "kill the community."

- Scepticism about the viability of community libraries (25.4% of responses) : While many of the respondents focused only on the possible closure of their local library, without addressing the issue of a community-run library taking its place, many also expressed grave doubts that volunteers would be able to provide as good a service as trained, paid staff, and feared for the longevity of the project.

- Bus fares, bus timetables and travel times (20.9%): Respondents valued a local, accessible library and were reluctant - or often unable, due to limited timetables or high fares - to travel to Newport or Ryde for a library.

- Children's educational achievement (16.9%): Much mention was made of the island's poor educational results, and fears were expressed that any reduction in library services would further reduce standards.

- Computer ownership (15.6%): Many respondents cited the low levels of computer ownership on the island, and feared that the proposals would further disadvantage those without internet access at home, many of whom rely on the library for internet access.

- Friendly, trained staff (13.9%): Respondents valued being able to receive help and support from trained, knowledgeable staff.

The consultation therefore reveals that residents believed that the "New Chapter" proposal contained a significant risk of a serious impact. Under the revised proposals, there is still a risk of a negative impact, should the network of community-run libraries fail to develop as envisaged, but this negative impact has

been mitigated as far as possible.

- Community need: The areas particularly identified as having strong local need for a library - the Bay Area, West Wight and Ventnor - would now retain a Council-run library. Although reduced, these opening hours would be arranged at times when existing usage patterns show there is the most demand, and reflect the time restrictions faced by working people and children at school. Should option C be adopted, local people will be empowered to form management groups in order to be involved in decision-making and resource allocation in the Council-run libraries, so these opening hours could then be changed in order to truly reflect local need.

- Scepticism about the viability of community libraries: Although a thriving and enduring network of community libraries has yet to be established, measures have been put in place to maximise their chances, as described in point 1.6 above. Option C will offer local people the chance to be involved in all decisions relating to their community library, to ensure that it truly meets local needs.

- Bus fares, bus timetables and travel times: The two areas most often identified as suffering from expensive or limited bus routes - Ventnor and West Wight - would now retain a Council-run library.

- Computer ownership: In the modified offer to community-run libraries, computers would be provided, in order to ensure that public internet access continues even in libraries no longer funded by the Council.

- Friendly, trained staff: Six libraries, rather than just two, will now be staffed by trained, paid staff. In addition, community groups might choose to seek funding to employ a paid member of staff, although this remains their choice. It will be essential that all volunteers receive training in order to perform their roles effectively, and if option C is chosen, community libraries will receive "mentoring" from their nearest Council-run library to support this training on an ongoing basis.

- Children's educational achievement: 82% of all current usage goes through the six libraries that will now be retained, so the majority of Island children will still have access. In other areas, community libraries will need to consider the needs of children. The Council will continue to fund the Summer Reading Challenge for all libraries - a scheme that has the proven effect of increasing children's educational achievement - and training will be offered to ensure that all community libraries offer this scheme.

While the consultation reveals that any reduction of libraries on the Island will have a negative impact on many people, the revised proposal mitigates this effect as far as possible, within the reduced resources available to the Council. By allowing communities to take real over the decisions that affect them, as in Option C, the model outlined in this proposal could transform any negative impact into a positive one.

Should it prove impossible to establish a thriving network of a community-run libraries, a further Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken to establish how needs can be met. Possible measures include the provision of a Mobile Library stop, or targeted outreach aimed at specific groups.

2.5 What does the consultation, research and/or data indicate about the positive impact on the service, policy, procedure, practice or project

The consultation revealed that library users above all value a library that is based in their own local community, and which is not just a "room full of books," but an unofficial community centre providing a place for social contact with fellow members of the community, and hosting events for all ages.

A service which, through the development of community libraries, is more local and accessible than at present should emerge in time. These community-run libraries will be run and staffed by local people, and their opening hours and stock will reflect local need, especially if Option C is adopted, and communities are

offered devolved budgets and allowed to make their own decisions. The measures outlined in section 1.6 above will help maximise the chances that this network develops.

In addition, there are currently towns and villages on the Island that do not benefit from a static library, even though they are in some cases larger than some of the places that do possess one. Expressions of Interest have been received from some communities that do not currently have a library, so it is possible that the benefits of a local library will be extended to people who do not currently have access to one.

Part 3   Assessment of impact

Now that you have looked at the purpose etc of the service, policy, procedure, practice or project (part 1) and looked at the research (part 2), this section asks you to assess the impact, positive and negative, of the service, policy, procedure, practice or project on each of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.

3.1   Complete this section with the following information – relating to all of the identified groups Equality Act 2010 (protected characteristics)
(please refer to the guidance for additional information)

Protected Characteristics	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Comments
Age	√			At present, a high proportion of library users only use their local library. For adults, this ranges from 51 to 69% of users (dependent on library), but the figure for children is much higher, ranging from 65 to 81%. Library closures are likely to affect children and young people disproportionately. Children are reliant on their parents to take them to the library, and the impact of the cost of fares for families having to travel to a library and the reduction in bus services in rural communities will have a negative effect on usage. Additionally, many schools bring classes to their local library on foot, and it is unlikely that they would hire transport to use a library in a different town.
		√		However, the six libraries that will remain as Council-run facilities are located in the busiest centres of population, close to many schools. In 2010, 46.5% of the children who took part in the Summer Reading Challenge - a scheme that encourages children to read over the holidays and has a proven record in developing literacy - did so in Newport or Ryde libraries, and 78% did so in the six libraries that would remain, under the revised proposals. Although 22% took part in the libraries that the Council is due to cease funding, any community-run library will be required to run the Summer Reading Challenge, and the Council will continue to fund the materials.
			√	It is possible that some community-run libraries will be situated in schools, Children's Centres and other places that will allow children and young

		√		people to access the service even more than they do at present. This will have a positive effect in time. Measures have been put in place to maximise these community libraries' chances for success. Should communities prove to be unable to provide a community-run library, the negative effect will be reduced by carefully-sited and carefully-timed mobile library visits, and by outreach work with schools, Children's Centres and Early Years settings. In addition, schools will still be able to buy into the School Library Service, which lends books to schools to support reading and project work. Since this is entirely funded by the schools' subscriptions, this will not be affected by the review of the Library Service. Measures have been put in place to ensure that community-run libraries reflect the needs of people from all age groups, and involve people from all groups in any community decision-making.
Disability	√			The current stock of buildings and services have been brought up in the main to be DDA compliant, although there are still some issues that need to be addressed. If libraries close and are not replaced with community-run facilities, people with mobility issues will find it harder to access the service. A Home Library Service will be commissioned in time, to provide a service for users with severe mobility issues. It will be important to ensure that any community-run library understands the need to meet the requirements of the DDA.
Gender Reassignment		√		
Marriage & Civil Partnership		√		
Pregnancy & Maternity		√		Currently all libraries are breastfeeding-friendly and support young mothers with a range of targeted activities and outreach in baby clinics, as well as ensuring delivery of the Bookstart Gifting Scheme. All libraries allow buggy access, and larger libraries have changing facilities. If libraries close and are not replaced with community-run facilities, families with very young children will find it harder to access the service, especially those without transport of their own. If communities take on existing premises, the accessibility should remain. New service outlets in non-Council premises will need to be reviewed, however, to ensure access.
			√	In addition, community groups might choose to house libraries in schools or Children's Centres, alongside other antenatal and post-natal services, in which case the impact on this group will be positive. Even if these community-run libraries do not develop, outreach work will still be delivered via Children's Centres and clinics, so this group will still be able to benefit from the service. In January 2011, it was announced that the Bookstart scheme, will still be funded. The Library Service will continue to co-ordinate the scheme on the Island. Bookstart is a universal book gifting scheme, in which libraries work with a variety of partners to encourage early literacy through parents

		√		parents sharing books with babies and toddlers. Since the delivery of the Bookstart packs takes place outside libraries - in clinics, Children's Centres and Early Years settings - this will be unaffected by the review of the Library Service.
Race		√		
Religion / Belief		√		
Sex (male/ female)		√		
Sexual Orientation (LGB&T)		√		Measures will need to be in place to ensure that community-run libraries reflect the needs of people from all groups, and to involve people from all groups in any community decision-making.

Part 4   Measures to mitigate disproportionate or adverse impact or improve on neutral or positive impacts: *(Please refer to the guidance for additional information)*

4.1   If there is any negative impact on any target equality group identified in part 3, is the impact intended or legal?

See sections above

4.2   Specify measures that can be taken to remove or minimize the disproportionate or adverse effect identified in part 3. If none were identified, identify how disproportionate or adverse effect could be avoided in the future.

The principal negative effect of the proposal comes from the uncertainty over the success of the community library network. 82% of current usage goes through the six libraries that will remain, but 18% of current users will still be losing their Council-run library.

A network of community-run libraries will take time to develop. The current proposal makes it significantly more likely that this network will be developed, since it offers the community more time and fewer sites to have to accept as transfers all at once. The offer to community groups has already been modified significantly since December 2010, and they will now be able to take over the existing library building, and will receive computers, book stock, Summer Reading Challenge materials and support. The five libraries in question would remain open for three more months, in order to allow time for community groups to develop their plans.

If a community library does not develop in an area that is losing its Council-run library, a service will be provided through mobile library stops and targeted outreach work, until a local community-run library can be established.

Quality control measures will be put in place to ensure that community-run libraries reflect the needs of people from all groups, and involve people from all groups in any community decision-making. The needs of children and young people will need to be considered in regard to the siting and opening hours of any community library. If Option C is chosen, local communities will be offered devolved budgets and empowered to make decisions about their local library that truly affect local need.

4.3   If there is no evidence that the service, policy, procedure, practice or project promotes equality, equal opportunities or improves relations within equality target groups, what amendments can be made to achieve this?

The library service by its very nature is available to all users, and it will ensure that any community facility embraces this ethos. If a library is replaced with a mobile library stop - perhaps as an interim measure before a community-run library can be set up - the access needs of children and people who work full-time will be considered. If a thriving network of community libraries does not emerge, it will be necessary to conduct an additional Equalities Impact Assessment that will inform decisions on future action.

4.4   If a neutral or positive impact has been identified, can that impact be improved upon (continuous improvement)?

Community-run libraries might potentially be staffed from a wider spectrum of the community and could be more responsive to the needs of the local community, especially if the model outlined in Option C is chosen, since that empowers local residents to have a real say in the shape of their local library service.

4.5   How will any service, policy, procedure, practice or project be implemented?

By the end of the "New Chapter" consultation process, ten Expressions of Interest has been received from community groups interested in running a community library. Negotiations are ongoing with these groups, as well as other groups, as to how to take these offers forward. An "Offer" has been put together detailing the support these community libraries will receive from the Library Service, which could include the handover of the existing library building (where appropriate; some Expressions of Interest come from places without a current library), computers, ,stock and Summer Reading Challenge materials.

In areas that retain a Council-run library, the community might choose to provide volunteers to extend the opening hours or extend the range of additional services - e.g. Health Walks, Rhyme Times etc. - on offer. This will be done as and when the community initiates it, and support and training will be offered.

4.6   As 4.5 above please identify training requirements.

The training of volunteers that may run community libraries will include diversity and equality issues. Groups submitting an Expression of Interest are required to demonstrate that they have considered the needs of all groups in their community.

Part 5   Conclusions & recommendations

This section ensures that what ever we are impact assessing, whether it be a service, policy, procedure, practice or project that ensure that we abide by the general and specific duties to promote race, disability and gender equality. *(Please refer to guidance for additional information)*

5.1   Does the service, policy, procedure, practice or project comply with equalities legislation?

Once a thriving community library network is developed, which is compliant with equality legislation, then the revised service will meet equality needs. If a community network is not set up in this way some Island residents may be adversely affected, especially those who are unable to travel. However, 82% of current usage goes through the six libraries that would be retained, which are in the areas of the highest

population, and also include the areas of the highest deprivation and greatest transport-related isolation.

This revised proposal incorporates several measures designed to maximise community libraries' chances of success, and Option C in particular offers genuine chances for local decision making. However, if it becomes clear that community-run libraries are not possible in some areas in which need has been identified, it will be necessary to undertake an additional Equalities Impact Assessment, which will inform future action.

5.2 What are the main areas requiring further attention?

When the thriving network of community-run libraries is established, the equality of access and service provided by the Library Service should remain at its current level. However, 18% of current usage takes place in libraries that the Council proposes to cease funding, so the main area requiring attention is the development of community libraries, to ensure that service coverage is maintained, or even expanded.

5.3 Summary of recommendations for improvement

The priority is to work with community groups on the development of community libraries, to ensure that they are set up as soon as possible, and that they are supported and provided with good quality training, in order to flourish.

5.4 What equality monitoring, evaluation, review systems have been set up to carry out regular checks?

It will be essential to ensure that equality and diversity issues are raised throughout the process in community run libraries and this is reflected in governance procedures of each community library.

5.5 When will the amended service, policy, procedure, practice or project be reviewed?

At present, the proposal under review is not formal policy. Following the Cabinet meeting on March 1st, a new Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken if the final plan differs from this proposal.

Part 6   Action / improvement plan

Area of negative impact	Changes proposed	Lead officer	Timescale	Resource implications	Comments
Age	To ensure specific needs of children and young people are considered during the commissioning process of community libraries.	Rob Jones	12-24months	Time to enable appropriate commissioning process to take place and develop community activity	
Disability	To ensure that any community-run library understands that they have to meet the needs of the DDA.	As above	As above	As above	
Gender Reassignment					
Marriage & Civil Partnership					
Pregnancy & Maternity	To ensure access needs of young families are considered during the commissioning process of community libraries	As above	As above	As above	
Race					
Religion / Belief					
Sex (male or female)					
Sexual Orientation					
Geographical location	Although it is the expectation that community libraries will be widespread this cannot be guaranteed and therefore access to a library service may be inequitable. Measures will need to be put in place to ensure that there is some level of service in places where no community library develops.	As above	As above	As above	

Part 6 continued – Equality Impact Assessment – Summary report

The results of equality impact assessments must be published. Please complete this summary, which will be used to publish the results of your impact assessment on the council's website. Please access the Work tab of the council's intranet and follow the instructions to upload your completed equality impact assessment on to the website.

Date of assessment	17.02.11

Officer's name	R Jones	**Role**	Libraries Officer

Service, policy, procedure, practice or project that was impact assessed	Revised Library Service

Summary of findings	The initial model had the potential to impact negatively on equality issues if a successful community library service was not widely developed or developed without quality assurance in place, but the new proposal includes a number of measures designed to maximise the chances that this network will develop as planned. Moreover, option C offers local residents the chance to get involved in decision making and resource allocation in their local library, thus ensuring that it meets the needs of all.

Summary of recommendations and key points of action plan	To encourage the development of community libraries as soon as possible and ensure that these new facilities fulfil equality and diversity needs.

Groups that this policy will impact upon

Age	√	
Disability	√	
Gender Reassignment		
Marriage & Civil Partnership		
Pregnancy & Maternity	√	
Race		
Religion / Belief		
Sex (male/female)		
Sexual Orientation		