



**Shifnal Town Council**

## **Shifnal Library, Allotment, Public Open Spaces and Car Parks Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Library and Town Council offices:**

The proposal for Shifnal is that the Town Council takes over the management of the library. The Town Council would move out of their present offices in Broadway into the library.

### **What do you mean by library and face to face services redesign?**

Shropshire Council is continuing to develop as a commissioning Council and to setting out its future commissioning intentions. Alongside this the Council is considering which parts of its business might be best delivered locally and will seek to reflect this within its future commissioning intentions.

Specifically the Council wants to work with partners to re-design existing face to face customer focused services in order to provide places that residents can easily access services and get information and advice that both helps them and enables them to help others within their community.

Our vision is that traditional face to face services will be delivered outside Shropshire Council by community focused enterprises who recognise and support the important role that organisations and individuals who are active in their communities have.

This approach, often referred to as localism, is also a key part of the government's effort to decentralise power and to support communities to be more empowered and to have a bigger say on the issues that matter to them.

### **What is your vision for library services redesign?**

We want to:

- Support the development of modern sustainable libraries achieved by the active involvement of community partners in the day to day operation of the library and the development of self-service facilities. Ongoing "back office" support provided by Shropshire Council.
- Explore opportunities to co-locate libraries with other services and partners within "community hubs" and to create synergies where appropriate.
- Provide flexible space to allow for library events such as Rhyme Time, Time to Listen, author events, etc.
- Provide public access computer facilities and free Wi-fi provision.

**Will the library remain at its current location?**

Yes the intention is for the library to remain in its existing location at Broadway, Shifnal

**What are the council's statutory duties to deliver library services?**

Under the provisions of the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964 the council has a statutory duty (not discretionary powers) to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons wishing to make use of it.

The Act does not define what is meant by "comprehensive and efficient". However it does provide that the library authority must make facilities available to people who live or work or are undergoing full-time education in Shropshire. It also provides that in fulfilling the duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service, it shall in particular have regard to the desirability of:

- Providing facilities for the borrowing of, and reference to, books and other printed matter, pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirement both adults and children; and
- Encouraging adults and children to make full use of the library service, providing advice as to its use, and making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required; and
- Securing co-operation between the library authority and others exercising public functions within the county

**Will the opening hours of the library change?**

The opening times of the library will remain the same if it is transferred to Shifnal Town Council. The Library opening hours would be reduced if it stayed with Shropshire Council. However, as part of the consultation, local people and community organisations have the opportunity to propose alternative solutions that could provide the same savings.

**What are the advantages of the library being run by the Town Council?**

The Town Council office being relocated into the Library building will provide the opportunity for the Town Council to become more visible and thereby more accessible for the public. More opportunities could also become possible for the use of the Library Building as a flexible versatile community space.

**How will the library be staffed? Will the existing library staff stay?**

The library will still be staffed, but the staff will no longer work for Shropshire Council. Existing staff will have the chance to transfer to work for Shifnal Town Council.

**What happens if the staff are ill, on leave, or have to attend training courses?**

Shifnal Town Council would have to find cover for staff. They would still have to provide a service to customers as outlined in the Service Level Agreement between them and Shropshire Council.

Shropshire Council will continue to provide the essential library related training that library staff need.

**How will this proposal save money?**

There will be savings made on accommodation by co-locating the Town Council offices and the library in one building, by joining the two services together and by sharing resources.

**If the Town Council didn't take it on, what would happen to the library?**

As part of the consultation, local people and community organisations have the opportunity to propose alternative solutions that could provide the same savings.

**Will the same library services still be provided?**

Yes, we want the people of Shifnal to receive the same level and range of library services. The Town Council will manage the library on a day to day basis but will be supported by Shropshire Council's Library Service in a number of ways. The books and computers will still be provided by Shropshire Council together with the library operating system and the support of a librarian based in Bridgnorth.

**Will we still be able to request books from other libraries and from libraries outside Shropshire/**

Yes, these services will continue in the same way.

**Will public computers still be available free of charge?**

Yes, the same number of public computers will be available. The arrangements will be the same; they will continue to be free of charge for library members and a small charge made for visitors.

**What assurances are there if Shifnal Town Council can't continue to run the library?**

We will have a three year service level agreement with Shifnal Town Council. The intention is to extend the agreement every 3 years. Shifnal Town Council and Shropshire Council are keen to work together to establish a viable and sustainable model for running the library in Shifnal.

However, if Shifnal Town Council can't run the service for any reason the library would revert back to Shropshire Council, who would then explore the option of running the library with another local partner. Shropshire Council also own the lease on the Shifnal Library building so that gives extra security around the library remaining in that building.

**Will the layout of the library change?**

Shropshire Council has funding to make alterations to Shifnal Library to make it a more flexible and user friendly and to accommodate the Shifnal Town Council offices.

**How much space for books will the library lose?**

There will be a small reduction in the number of books but we feel this is sustainable. We no longer need as many reference books because of access to the internet and books and magazines are now also available online to library members. It is more about providing the books that people want, working hard to provide regular exchanges with other libraries and providing a request service.

**Is Shifnal Library accessible to people with disabilities?**

Yes, the building is accessible for wheelchair users. All services are located on the ground floor of the building which is totally accessible. Staff delivering services at the building will also receive training to help them assist customers with disabilities to access the range of services available.

**Will there be continuous service whilst these changes take place?**

We would do our best to ensure that there is minimum disruption to our customers during any alterations to the building or transfer of services to new locations in the building.

**Are other libraries in Shropshire changing too?**

Yes this is part of a wider process across the county. Shropshire Libraries must save £1.3 million over the next 3 year period, and we're reviewing how services are delivered at all Shropshire's libraries. Consultations are taking place at a local level through "community conversations".

Nationally the way libraries are run is also changing, with the community taking a bigger role in the running of libraries, so this process isn't unique to Shropshire.

**When will these changes happen?**

The changes are planned to start in early 2016, subject to the result of the public consultation and a final decision.

**Customer Service Point:**

Shifnal Customer Service Point is located in the library and is open on two half-days each week for members of the public to drop in and speak to a member of the Customer Service team.

Our proposal is for the library staff, together with the Town Council, to deliver the Customer Services function. Staff will be able to help customers with paperwork, offer general information and help customers to access Council services directly via a customer Freephone and computer on-line service linked to Shropshire Council's Customer Service Centre.

**What is your vision for customer service point redesign in more detail?**

We understand the importance of a face to face service to many of our customers who may not be able to use alternative means of doing business such as over the telephone or online or who need help to use these alternatives.

We want to make sure that people are still able to get the direct help they need, when they need it and we therefore propose working in partnership with other providers of help and advice in localities, specifically the Town Council and the Library Service. By doing this, people will be able to access a much wider range of help and services than we currently offer.

In addition to direct face to face help, we will install a telephone and a computer both of which will be free to use so that our customers have an extended range of ways to contact us and conduct business with Shropshire Council.

**Will I still be able to get my blue badge and bus pass?**

Yes, staff will be able to help you make your application between set times or you can self-serve using the new public computer.

**What happens if I need help to fill out a form?**

Library and town council staff will be on hand to help and advise if you cannot complete a form.

**I can't use a computer, how will I get help with what I need?**

When you see someone at a Customer Service Point they usually do what is needed via their computer, a new public computer will be available and staff will be on hand to help if needed.

**If I use the phone at the new points of contact who does it get me through to?**

The phones are linked directly to Shropshire Council's Customer Service Centre who will be able to deal with most things for you.

**What sort of services can I get over the phone?**

We can provide almost all of the same services over the phone including making payments.

**Will the Customer Service Centre opening hours change?**

The service will be available for at least the same opening hours as the library which is an increase, from current opening times.

**Will the staff at the library know enough to be able to help me?**

Customer Services staff will train the library and town council staff and make sure that they are kept up to date when things change. Also, support will be available via helplines should they need help.

**Public Open Spaces:**

Our proposal is for the Aston Street allotments and 9 areas of greenspaces in Shifnal would become the responsibility of Shifnal Town Council

**What are the benefits to Shifnal of taking over the Aston Street Allotments?**

The allotments would be safeguarded for use as allotments for the term of the lease. They would be brought into line with the other 2 existing allotments at Priorslee Road and Broadway and the future allotments on Haughton Road development. This would provide uniformity in terms of operation and charges.

**What are the benefits to Shifnal of taking over the public open spaces?**

These spaces would be mowed and tended to by a local contractor. Will fall in line with the fortnightly scheme that is carried out presently by the Town Council on its other areas. Any concerns and issues would be handled more rapidly and thereby the community would get increased quality areas of greenspaces around Shifnal.

**Car Parks:**

Presently, the Aston Street Car Park and Kings Yards Car Park are the responsibility of Shropshire Council. Shifnal Town Council pays an annual charge to Shropshire Council to keep the car parks free of charge.

Our proposal is for Shifnal Town Council to take over the responsibility of the 2 car parks.

**Will the car parks be still free to use?**

Shifnal Town Council will work very closely with Shifnal Forward's Transport Action Group to explore the various options and the public would be consulted before a decision was made.

**What are the benefits for Shifnal?**

These car parks would be safeguarded for use as car parks for the term of the lease. They would be maintained to the level that the local community expect them to be maintained.

**Next Steps:**

We are seeking public comments on these proposals from **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September until Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015.**

Comments can also be submitted online by going to **[shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved](http://shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved)** and searching for **Shifnal Library Consultation** You can also submit your comments on the survey forms available at the library, Shifnal Town Council Office, Katerina's and the Old Fire Station.

When the consultation has ended the responses will be considered and a recommendation will be made about the future of the library.