

REPORT TO: Local Economy Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 17 November 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Employment Learning, Skills and Community

SUBJECT: Halton Library Service Review - Service update including Runcorn library relocation.

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Library service including: the relocation of Runcorn Library, acquisition of an electric vehicle and amendment to opening hours.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) Members receive a presentation on the Library Service.**
- 2) Members note the report and endorse the Library Service approach.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In March this year, the Library service reported responses to public consultation which demonstrated changes in Library user's needs and identified ways to best deliver a service that is responsive, whilst ensuring service consistency and continuing to meet the Council's statutory duty in a climate of reduced resources.
- 3.2 The Library service consultation (appendix 1), posed questions around changes to opening hours with responses demonstrating:
- 94% of survey responders use Halton Libraries.
 - 57% agree with the proposed opening hours.
- 3.3 A full consultation dashboard was developed:-
<https://my.visme.co/view/x40jq4jd-library-opening-hours#s1>
- 3.4 Amendments to opening hours, to reflect the responses and the data on footfall (appendix 2) are being progressed for implementation from January 2026 across the Libraries four static sites.

- 3.5 The revised hours, provide consistency in Library site opening hours and supports the transition of Runcorn Library into its permanent location, at the Brindley in Spring 2026, the service will offer an evening opening along with extended library access via self-service stations.
- 3.6 In April 2025, Runcorn Library relocated from Granville Street to its temporary site in Church Street; the move preserved Library relations with the Old Town community.
- 3.7 The highly visible location has experienced increased footfall and curiosity with local residents presenting key opportunities to engage and promote the Brindley extension, a core pillar of Reconnecting Runcorn regeneration.
- 3.8 The temporary site has enabled engagement and community conversation on the future expansive Library plans and provided a space for Culture 2026 visuals and promotion.
- 3.9 The permanent library relocation is planned for Spring 2026, on completion of the extension programme. The enhanced Library will not only provide a site that is bigger in size but also vaster in its offers and ability to best serve the communities of Runcorn and further afield, as it becomes a desirable co-location space with community and culture at its core.
- 3.10 The acquisition of an electric library vehicle and part time courier, to help significantly expand the library service's outreach offer and provide new and enhanced services to a wider sector of the community, is near completion with the van acquired and branded, and courier recruitment commenced. The alterations to the 'Home Library' delivery service model are scheduled for implementation in early 2026, with a significant increase in demand forecast.
- 3.11 Opening hours across the four sites to be implemented are as set out in the consultation document detailed in appendix one.
- 3.12 **Service Efficiency**
The evolving Library service delivery model simultaneously grows and expands the reach and access to the Library service throughout the borough whilst ensuring an efficient use of resources.
- 3.13 The overall financial position is the proposals presented in March, provide a saving in year one of £49,599.97. With reduced costs in subsequent years of £91,599.97 less the £2,666 increased outreach costs, a net position of £88,933.87 savings per annum.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 require the Council to

provide a comprehensive and efficient Library service for all those who live, work or study and want to access the service in the borough.

- 4.2 Consultations with the Department for Culture Media and Sport have and continue to take place regarding any changes to Library opening hours.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A cost saving analysis has been completed working with the Council's Finance service to determine cost savings of the recommendations:

Cost savings of proposals per year		
Initiate proposed more consistent opening hours	25.6 % of total savings	£37,917.10
Closing Runcorn and Ditton on Saturdays (commenced Summer 25)	16.1 % of total savings	£23,766.61
Amend late nights to 6pm from 7pm	20.3 % of total savings	£29,916.26
Total:		£91,599.97

Estimated costs of vehicle acquisition.	
Purchase cost of vehicle	£39,000
Custom livery and branding	£3,000
Total Capital Outlay:	£42,000
Estimated annual running costs of vehicle.	
Annual vehicle maintenance costs	£2,000
Part-time courier at HBC3* 18.5 hrs p/w. *subject to evaluation	£ 15,996
Total:	£17,996
RMU costs per annum, to be deducted from total above (not required if own vehicle and courier in library service)	-£15,330
Total annual cost difference: £17,996-£15,330	£2,666

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

Halton library service has consulted on the proposed amendment to opening hours and received a high response rate of 718 consultations completed, with 57% of respondents in favour of the proposals.

See *Appendix 1* for: Main findings from the Councils, Research and Data team of analysis of the consultation.

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

A Library offer directly impacts residents wellbeing with connectivity to assets and services and supporting learning, leisure and research.

Delivering an outreach Library service directly to individuals in their homes promotes independence, supporting positive mental health. The Library service offers dementia boxes and a variety of other reading and support materials.

The Home Library Service caters to carers, individuals with mobility challenges, those facing illness, and those with caregiving responsibilities.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Enhancing residents' skills and development through signposting, IT support, online resources and specialist book stock. Fostering stronger partnerships and collaborative relationships with local businesses, charities and organisations.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The Library service provides high-quality services to children, young people, to enhance children's literacy levels, empowering children to achieve their full potential. The service works with Family Hubs and local stakeholders to support and strengthen this delivery.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The Library service provides accessible advice, information, and services to support individuals in Halton's community facing the greatest need. Offering resources, guidance, and assistance to those dealing with poverty, inequality, and vulnerability.

The Library service acknowledges and strives to meet the diverse needs of the local community.

Providing an enhanced digital inclusion by offering access to essential tools and fostering the development of skills and confidence necessary for success. Empowering individuals to

improve their digital abilities and connect to the internet.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Using an electric vehicle and improving inefficient delivery routes, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality contributing to the Council's ambitions set out in the Climate Action Plan.

The proposed changes to Halton Libraries opening hours will reduce energy and utility consumption in Library buildings.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Halton Library Service is a vital resource for Halton's community, offering access to books, educational opportunities, cultural activities, as well as information, events, and various opportunities for all members of the community.

7.0 Risk Analysis

- 7.1 The risk of not implementing these proposals is continuing inconsistent service provision across the Library sites and a limited outreach provision lacking future adaptability for the service.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 A thorough Equality Impact statement and Needs Assessment was completed, reports can be accessed here: -

Equality Impact statement – Appendix 3

Halton Libraries Needs Assessment – Appendix 4

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Halton Library service is committed to supporting climate change.

Pledging to be a part of the Green Libraries Campaign, which is a UK-wide, cross-sector programme focused on the contribution of Librarians, information and knowledge professionals to the sustainability agenda. With the aim to encourage Libraries to actively reduce their carbon footprint and increase awareness of environmental issues for the wider public by providing accessible resources of which Halton library service endorses, provides and highlights regularly with focused stock collections, our e-resources and on our social media channels and at focused events such as information stands, and partnership work.

- 9.2 The Green Libraries Partnership was developed in response to COP26 and the long-term climate commitments made by local authorities across England with the aim to place Libraries at the heart of environmental change and enable Libraries to build

environmental action within their communities.

- 9.3 The Library service has acquired an electric vehicle to replace the existing non-electric vehicle that is used for all Library deliveries. Also reducing the amount of carbon pollution generated by the needs of the Library service along with the proposed opening hours resulting in lower energy and utility consumption by the buildings.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

‘None under the meaning of the Act.’