Report title: Changes to Mobile Library Services	
Report to: Cabinet	
Report author: Suzanna Shaw, Director, Customer Services	
Date: 23 January 2018	**For:** Decision
Enquiries to: Cheryl Arthur, Head of Telephone and Digital Access email cheryl.arthur@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   To seek approval for changes to the Mobile Libraries Service, and other parts of the Essex Library Service, following the public consultation conducted on the matter between 19 September and 6 November 2017, ensuring that the Mobile Libraries Service provides value for money while also providing a comprehensive and efficient service.

2.   Recommendations

2.1   Agree that ECC should withdraw mobile library stops unless they meet the following criteria:-
   • The location being 1.5 miles by driving distance or more from a library;
   • The average number of customers per visit over a six month period (rounded to the nearest integer) is one or zero;
   • That each community should only have one stop (Where two or more stops serve one community, the most popular and/or accessible stop will be kept); and
   • That each mobile library stop is at least half an hour in length (rather than the current length which is at least 20 minutes).
   • That mobile library visits should be three weekly rather than two weekly as currently.
   • That the stops remain accessible to the mobile library vehicles.

2.2   Adopt the library needs assessment as at appendix 2.

2.3   Agree to introduce the new criteria from 2 April 2018, leading to the reduction in the number of Mobile Library stops from 557 to 213 stops.

2.4   Agree not to replace the seven mobile libraries which are coming to the end of their economic life, meaning that the Council will reduce the number of mobile library vehicles from 9 to 2 by May 2018.

2.5   Agree to review the remaining stops every six months after 2 April 2018, with any changes being agreed by a Cabinet Member Action, along with a revised timetable if applicable.

2.6   Agree to:
- Work with affected communities to promote expansion of home library service and community libraries.
- Work with care home and sheltered housing providers to encourage them to develop home or community library services.
- Provide support to providers of community libraries to ensure that volunteers are appropriately trained on duties including support for the community.

3.   Summary of issue

Background

3.1   Essex County Council (ECC) has a statutory duty as a library authority to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service. Currently it does this through 74 library buildings, an online library services and nine mobile libraries.

3.2   The nine mobile library vehicles each have around 2,000 books. They currently serve 557 stops around the county on a fortnightly cycle. Most stops are on public roads but some are at care homes, sheltered housing or older people's housing complexes, outside schools and pre-schools as well as some prisons and secure sites. The current network of stops has grown up piecemeal over many years and has not been the subject of a comprehensive review within recent memory. There are no formal criteria for providing or withdrawing mobile library stops which means that we have, in general, provided stops if a stop can be fitted in, and stops have not been withdrawn even if they receive little or no custom.

3.3   Although the network is unchanged, the number of mobile library visits by members of the public has been falling, with a 47% fall over the last six years – down from 120,578 in 2010/11 to 64,289 in 2016/17. Monitoring over 12 weeks from May to July 2017 suggests that many of the 557 stops on mobile library routes receive few visitors each fortnight. When this monitoring was extended for a further three month period, 35 stops recorded an average of 0 visitors (rounded to the nearest integer). ECC lease the nine vehicles used to provide the mobile library service. Seven of the nine vehicles are nearing the end of their useful life and their maintenance contract expires in May 2018. Due to the age of these seven vehicles, the contracts cannot be extended. If the vehicles were used past the end of the contract, they would be increasingly expensive due to increased maintenance costs, and are uninsurable. New vehicles would be more expensive than the current vehicles as a result of inflation. We believe that leasing a new vehicle would cost around £60,000 per annum.   The combination of the age of the vehicles

and the fall in usage coupled with the lack of a review means that it is appropriate to look at how ECC provides these services.

3.4 In addition, in 2017/18 ECC has been piloting three community libraries in the Tendring district. Community Libraries are run by volunteers in community buildings. All library users are entitled to use community libraries and ECC refreshes the stock of books at least every quarter. A community library may have 200 or more books with the opening hours determined by the community who provide volunteers to run it. These pilots have proved popular amongst residents. Due to the success of the pilots undertaken, it is proposed that ECC should look to establish these further as they potentially offer longer hours of service compared to Mobile Library stops which are usually 20 minutes per fortnight. Community Libraries are not the same as volunteer-run libraries, such as Jaywick Library Access Point (run by a volunteer trust since 2006) and Springfield, (run by volunteers recruited and managed by ECC since 2013).

3.5 Faced with a fall in the Council's budget and demand, and the need to replace vehicles, we considered a number of alternative proposals. Most of the proposals involved a reduction in the frequency of visits and the reduction in the number of stops. In order to decide which stops should be removed we developed proposed criteria which would be used to decide which stops were removed if the Council decided to reduce the number of stops. In order to determine the future of the service the Council has undertaken a public consultation exercise.

Public Consultation

3.6 ECC conducted a seven week long public consultation between 19 September and 6 November 2017, to ask people what they felt about the proposed criteria and how the Council should ensure that the service offers good value for money. The consultation asked for responses against the new proposed criteria which, it was proposed, would be applied to libraries to allow ECC to assess the need, frequency and timing of mobile library stops across Essex.

3.7 All active library card holders who use the mobile library were contacted and invited to respond, together with stakeholders including district, borough, city, town and parish councils and community organisations.

3.8 The consultation was widely publicised through traditional media routes as well as social media. Publicity (such as posters) and copies of the consultation materials were available in all libraries, mobile libraries and at ECC building receptions, inviting the public to take part. Draft needs and equality impact assessments were prepared and published as part of the consultation.

3.9 As part of the consultation ECC issued two questionnaires. The main survey was for adults, families with children under 11 and also organisations ('the Main Survey'), and this was available online and on paper, and in large print and Braille. This Main Survey was also available in Easy Read for people with

learning disabilities or communications difficulties. A separate survey was created for children and young people under 16 ('the Young Persons Survey'). A telephone helpline was available for people who wished to complete the survey over the phone.

3.10   The Consultation closed on 6 November 2017. A copy of the consultation documents can be found at Appendix 3, and the final results and analysis can be found at Appendix 4 to this report.

3.11   In total, 1,386 responses were recorded for the consultation from mobile library users and other groups comprising 1,128 individuals, 160 families with children under 11, and 68 organisations. 30 consultees did not identify themselves as an individual, family or organisation.

3.12   Of the organisations taking part, 30 identified themselves as town or parish councils, four as district or borough councils, three as other public bodies, nine as community groups and eight as registered charities. Other organisations taking part included pre-schools and nurseries.

3.13   The Young Person Survey received 40 responses. The Easy Read version of the Main Survey was completed by three people.

3.14   ECC also received 48 comments from other individuals or groups from various routes such as freedom of information requests or through the member's enquires process. They were categorised as follows.
    • 28 were from adults
    • 3 from community groups
    • 1 from a district/borough council
    • 12 from town or parish councils
    • 2 from ECC staff and
    • 2 that were not identified as fitting one of the above categories.

3.15   ECC did receive three further responses after the end of the consultation, including a petition with 33 signatures. The petition urged ECC not to cut the number of stops to less than half the present number, not to reduce the vehicle fleet or reduce service to schools, old people's homes or sheltered housing, to ensure any volunteer-run libraries are adequately supported by paid staff and to reinvest any savings in the library service.

3.16   Of the individual and family respondents, 75% said they used mobile libraries and 74% said they had used the service in the previous month; 54% exclusively use mobile libraries and 46% also use library buildings. The age and gender profile of respondents was broadly consistent with the profile of people who joined Essex Libraries on a mobile library and had used their library card within the previous year): 77% female, 23% male; 27% aged 20 to 60, 68% aged 61 or over. 30% of these respondents consider themselves to have an impairment or disability.

New criteria for assessing the need of a Mobile Library Service stop in a location

(a) The location being 1.5 miles by driving distance or more from a library building

3.17   The Council consulted on a proposal to only provide a mobile library service if the stop is at least 2 miles from a current stop. Responses to the criterion 'remove stops which are less than two miles from a static library site' were the least positive of all the questions - 39% indicated that they strongly agree or agree with the proposal whilst 48% strongly disagreed or disagreed. Appendix 4 contains the responses to the survey.

3.18   The purpose of this criterion is to ensure that we do not provide mobile library stops when there is a library in the local area. The mobile library service is principally designed to serve communities which do not have library provision rather than being targeted at those with limited mobility as people would still have to walk often some distance to use them (although the service does have stops which may be convenient for many people with reduced mobility who happen to live close to the stops). The home library service is the service designed for those with limited mobility. On reviewing the individual comments made in response to the consultation, a number of respondents felt that 2 miles was too far to expect people to walk and that some flexibility should be retained.

3.19   However, on reviewing the current stops, there are only 18 stops which are between 1.5 and 2 miles of a library building and we believe that we can service these 18 stops without the need for additional resources. On that basis we propose to change the criterion from 2 miles to 1.5 miles. The revised criterion will still mean that some people will have to walk further to access the library if they cannot use public transport, but is also the case that many such people will have to have to travel similar distances to access other local services they need. If people are unable to travel because they have limited mobility then they will be eligible for support from the home library service.

(b) Removal of a stop which has been used by 1 or 0 fewer recorded visitors (rounded to the nearest integer) over the previous six months.

3.19   The outcome of the consultation showed that there is broad agreement with the proposal to 'withdraw or remove mobile library stops that consistently have no visitors over at least six months' – 82% agreement within the Main survey, and 72% agreement in the Young Persons survey.

3.20   7% of responses to the Main Survey did not agree or disagree and 11% indicated that they disagreed with the proposal. In consideration of those responses, to continue to service those stops which consistently have no (or almost no) visitors would result in the vehicles and staff being sat unutilised at 35 stops across Essex, and ECC would continue to incur the associated costs. This is considered unsustainable at this time.

3.21 Accordingly it is proposed that the criteria allows for the removal of stops that 'have been used by 1 or 0 recorded visitors (rounded to the nearest integer) on average over the previous six months'. This was broadly supported by the feedback (see appendix 4). A number of respondents said that if stops were combined then longer stop time may be required. This is being addressed by increasing the minimum stop time to 30 minutes.

(c) Where two or more stops serve one community, the most popular and/or accessible stop will be kept

3.22 The Main Survey showed that 63% (and 53% of organisations) agreed that stops which served the same community should be merged.

3.23 12% of responses to the Main Survey did not agree or disagree and 25% indicated that they disagreed with the proposal. ECC has considered whether it is possible to allow for multiple stops within the same community. However, in order to make each stop meaningful, it is necessary to allow each mobile library sufficient time at each stop its services. By maintaining multiple stops this will cause a reduction in time spent at each stop, which undermines the usefulness of the stop itself. ECC consider that by merging local stops, where appropriate, it will allow the overall stop time to be increased, and therefore each stop will better serve the community. Some respondents raised an issue that sometimes the library is delayed by traffic or other reasons and a single longer stop will help residents by having a longer opportunity to visit. Some residents were concerned that some villages are spread out and that this could make it hard for people living in the extremities of a village. Others said that stops had been merged in the past successfully. Others said that if the stop is merged then the remaining stop will be busier and we will need to ensure that the stop is long enough. This should be assisted by the proposal to have 30 minute stop as a default.

3.24 Accordingly it is proposed that the criteria allows for the merging of stops where 'there are two or more stops serving one community', with the most popular and/or accessible stop being retained. This was broadly supported by the consultation (see appendix 4 for more details).

(d) Increase each mobile library stop to at least half an hour in length

3.25 The majority of respondents agreed to the proposal to 'increase the minimum stop time to 30 minutes' – 68% agreement within the Main Survey, and 55% agreement amongst organisations. It should be noted, however, that the proportion of organisations indicating neither agreement nor disagreement to this proposal is relatively high.

3.26 20% of responses to the Main Survey neither agreed or disagreed, and 12% indicated that they disagreed with the proposal. To continue the service with 15 or 20 minutes at the majority of stops would result in customers having less time to access the service and due to the reduction of overall stops may need to travel further to get there. Accordingly this was considered a factor that might see a further reduction in the number of attendees at mobile library

stops. By increasing the time, it will allow greater time to view the books on offer, and allow more people to attend. There was a lot of support for this proposal because it would allow people more time to browse and reduce the risk that residents would miss the library. Some respondents also felt that this would make the service more resilient to traffic and other delays. However, a significant number expressed the view that the current stop (typically 20 minutes) was long enough, and that retaining a 20 minute stop could enable more stops to be retained, but our view is that the a minimum of 30 minutes would be a significant benefit which is achievable with the proposed level of resources. It should be noted that some current stops are longer than 30 minutes and we would anticipate retaining the majority of those.

3.27   Accordingly it is proposed that the criterion 'That each mobile library stop is at least half an hour in length' is included, and that this is applied to the revised provisional timetable on the basis of this result.

(e)   Other comments on the criteria

3.28   Other comments on the criteria are summarised on page 22 of appendix 4. Responses from organisations and the public who wrote to ECC in response to the consultation are set out at appendix 4A.

(f)   Alternative criteria

3.29   As part of the consultation, consultees were asked to suggest if there were other criteria which we should use to determine which stops to keep.

Suggested criteria	%age of respondents	ECC response
Local demographics eg population served by each stop and number of disabled people living nearby	10%	It would be difficult to do a detailed demographic analysis of each library. We are focussing on withdrawal of stops nearer to library buildings or one which are lightly used. The current pattern of stops is not based on demographic information. ECC does not have a comprehensive provision in all areas with a high concentration of such people and the service is not aimed at this group in particular. To review stops to ensure equality of provision based on this demography would entail greater change and it would be very difficult to do in practice. The home library service is aimed at such persons.
Concentrate provision on older people – eg sheltered accommodation and care homes	8%	ECC does not currently have a comprehensive practice of providing a stop at such places and for similar reasons as set out above it is not proposed to change this. These locations may be suitable locations for community libraries and we will work with providers to explore this

Suggested criteria	%age of respondents	ECC response
		possibility in locations where the mobile libraries are withdrawn.
Consider access to public transport and regular bus services	7%	We believe the criteria will effectively prioritise communities with no bus services because these are likely to be more than 1.5 miles from a library building.
criteria based on isolation +access to public transport	5%	As above, we believe that the criteria do prioritise these places.
Parking availability	3%	A number of people suggested that availability of parking would be a good criterion. Whilst it is important to have a location to park the vehicle which is reliably available, parking for visitors to a mobile library is not a criterion included since no one will have to drive more than 1.5 miles to a library building which will have much better facilities.
Central location	3%	It is likely that such stops will be busier so when the Council is selecting between multiple stops the current criteria will tend to favour central locations.
Stops near schools	3%	Whilst some respondents to the consultation do use mobile libraries as the stop is convenient for a school journey, that would not necessarily be the case at all times of day. Schools generally maintain their own library so this criterion is unlikely to help many children and could disadvantage other groups if less busy school stops were prioritised over stops used by a wider range of people.
Safety of access/traffic/ease of access	2%	We believe that all current locations are safe, but this will be taken into account where multiple locations in one community are considered
Convenient places near supermarkets etc	2%	If there are suitable stops in these places and they are popular and meet criteria then they will be retained. If they are near library buildings then there is more choice of books there and most customers will be able to drive there although some people have raised concerns about availability of parking at some libraries.
Consider pre-school	2%	There are many competing demographics. The proposed criteria strike a balance

Suggested criteria	%age of respondents	ECC response
children/young		between use by all sections of the community.

(g) Frequency of visits

3.30 The current service generally visits each location fortnightly. Respondents were asked whether they would prefer three weekly or four weekly visits in future. They were also asked if it was acceptable to offer visits on days and times not currently offered by the service (eg evenings or weekends).

3.31 The results of the consultation are set out in appendix 4. In summary, 56% of residents supported three weekly stops and 38% supported 4 weekly stopes (with 51% being opposed to four weekly stops).

3.32 With respect to different times of visit the consultation 49% of individual respondents were in favour with 23% being against and 28% neither agreed nor disagreed. It was clear from the qualitative consultation responses that many respondents were concerned that the question about different days was intended to suggest that the day of the mobile library visit may change from visit to visit. This is not the case – the intention is that each stop will be allocated a new fixed time, but that this may be on a different day or time of the week than the current visit, and that the days of operation and timing of the arrival at the stop may differ from the current service.

(h) Other comments

3.33 During the consultation ECC also received additional comments regarding the proposal outside the consultation documents. These are set out in Appendix 4a.

3.34 Respondents were asked what impact the withdrawal of the service would have on them. 46% said they would be able to access another library service, 37% said that they would not and 17% were unsure. If mobility is the reason why people will be unable to access a library then those residents would be eligible for the home library service. Further, it is likely that in some cases community libraries will be established. The criteria aim to target the service on those with greatest use to minimise the impact on residents. It cannot however be denied that some people will lose easy access to library facilities.

3.35 Respondents were asked if they wanted to make any other comment. These comments are analysed in the table below:

Issue	% raising	ECC response
Vital service / depend on / important social function / part of community life	11%	The Council recognises the importance of the service and these changes are designed to retain the services where they are of the most benefit and where there is the greatest need. The community library will provide the opportunity for communities to build upon mobile libraries if they

Issue	% raising	ECC response
		so wish and the home library service will be retained in cases of need.
More consideration of elderly and disabled users / health issues / no other options / limited mobility / unable to carry heavy books	6%	The Council has to balance the needs of all users. We have sought to retain stops in areas of greatest need. Community libraries may be available in other locations. The home library service will be available for those in the greatest need.
Main / other libraries are too difficult for me to get to / inconvenient / no public transport / expensive	8%	We have tried to retain services in areas of greatest need. Most people need to visit the centres of settlements for other activities of daily living. Whilst it may be nice to avoid the cost of public transport or parking, the mobile library service was not intended for this purpose.
More publicity / be more visible / many people unaware / provide more information / communicate more	5%	We already provide a great deal of information about the availability of mobile libraries in local shops and businesses and online.
Community libraries / libraries in village halls - positive mentions	3%	It is positive that this initiative is supported by some residents. We believe that community libraries can be a real benefit and provide a better service than the mobile libraries.
Ensure and encourage children's access to Mobile Library Service / improves reading / educational aspect	3%	We have tried to retain services in areas of greatest need.
Would be able to access other library services / building / mobile stops	2%	We believe from the main questionnaire that virtually all many people will still be able to access library services either via continued access to mobile libraries or by visiting a library building or by the establishment of a community library or by using the home library service.
Concern if mobile library service stops library access will be difficult in the future / when older	2%	We believe that most people will be able to access library services
Online ordering of books to collect at the mobile library van - Positive mentions	2%	We note that this is a valued service which will continue to be available to library users.
Would no longer be able to use Library Services	1%	We believe that most people will continue to be able to access the library service.
Mobile Library Service needs to continue as it is / don't change / do not cut it	1%	Whilst change may be unwelcome the reality is that service usage is falling and the Council cannot maintain its service without investing in new vehicles and it is difficult to justify this at a time of falling usage.
Parking is difficult / unavailable at main / other libraries	1%	Libraries are generally located in centres of population where parking availability is the same as in in the centre generally. Most people need to visit one centre or other in the course of their daily activities.
Would be able to access other library services but unlikely to do so	1%	This is likely to apply to a minority of people who lose access to a library in their community and where only a small number of
Home Library Service - positive mentions / should be provided	1%	We will continue to ensure that the mobile library service meets demand from those who are unable to access library services for mobility reasons.
Greater variety of books, etc. / better maintenance of books	1%	The mobile libraries have limited capacity which is why a better stock is generally available from

Issue	% raising	ECC response
		library buildings.
Combine multiple stops in same area to maintain service	1%	This is something which the Council proposes to do.
Prefer mobile library atmosphere / feel to a library building	1%	This is a matter of individual preference, but many people prefer the more extensive collections available from a library building
Understand the reasons for the proposal / cuts have to be made	1%	Noted.

3.36   In addition some people made ECC notes the comments around the mobile library service being more than just about the books, and that it is also a place and time for many individuals to engage in conversation with someone, sometimes for the first time that day. ECC is aware of the importance of such social interaction. Where the mobile library is available it will be there for 30 minutes, albeit it will be only there every 3 weeks.

3.37   Where the mobile library stop is withdrawn from a community, the Council will seek to work with community to develop community libraries, which will be likely to have longer opening hours albeit with fewer books.

3.38   Based on the results indicated above, ECC have applied the new criteria to the current mobile stops. The outcome of this is that there is an overall reduction in the number of current stops from 557 to 213 stops, and these are set out in the revised timetable attached at Appendix 6.

Decommissioning of seven mobile library vehicles

3.39   The lease and maintenance contract on the seven mobile library vehicles expires in May 2018 and, because of their age, cannot be renewed. The annual lease cost for a newer, replacement vehicle is around £60,000. Two remaining vehicles from ECC's current fleet are not due to be out of contract until 2026.

3.40   If the new criteria are applied, and the number of stops is reduced, that the remaining stops can be adequately serviced by the remaining two vehicles. The implementation of the revised timetable will be further supported by developing a number of community libraries and expansion of the Home Library Service, and appropriate solutions for older people's homes.

3.41   Removing seven mobile library vehicles from the roads will also have a positive environmental impact as it decreases ECCs carbon impact by having less vehicles undertaking fewer miles to deliver the service.

Reviewing stops every six months after 2 April 2018

3.42   It is proposed that following implementation on 2 April 2018, ECC will review the mobile library service every six months against the new criteria in paragraph 2.1 and update the timetable on this basis. Any changes to future number and frequency of stops in line with the criteria agreed within this report

will be agreed by a Cabinet Member Action. Any changes to the criteria will also be covered in the cabinet member action, and if needs be an additional consultation would need to be conducted subject to legal advice.

Role of Community Libraries, Home Library Service and alternatives for Old People's Homes

3.43   Between July and September 2017, ECC ran a pilot project in Tendring district, which tested the community libraries concept, using two different models across 3 sites; Ramsey War Memorial Hall, Beaumont Village Hall and Bradfield Community Centre. They were libraries run by community volunteers, supplied with Essex Library Service books, for the community. Ramsey War Memorial Hall and Beaumont Village Hall used their own volunteers to run their library and maintain the membership of their users, with different offers. A 'Man in a Van' model, using ECC staff was piloted at Bradfield Community Centre as there was no registered volunteer interest. The outcome was that community libraries were a viable concept in relation to the Ramsey and Beaumont models.

3.44   By providing books in locations such as a village hall or shop which people can access more regularly than a mobile library vehicle, community libraries can provide people greater access to Essex Libraries' stock. The consultation asked for expressions of interest in setting up community libraries. Just over one in ten who responded to the Main Survey indicated they would be interested in getting involved in setting up a community library.

3.45   The consultation highlighted that there were potentially six sites across the County that had declared an interest in hosting a community library, and over 50 other sites were suggested by respondents to the consultation for further investigation. In addition, more than 100 people expressed an interest in helping to set up and maintain a community library. It is recommended that ECC should now engage with communities and individuals showing interest in this approach, and will assess sites based on the conditions as stated in Appendix 5.

3.46   Over the medium term, ECC anticipates the community libraries model will replace more mobile library stops, as community libraries potentially allow greater access to books at a time which is convenient to customers, greater community involvement, and can contribute more to reducing social isolation. For example, if a mobile library stop becomes unviable as it becomes inaccessible to a mobile library vehicle, ECC would discuss with the community if there could be a community library placed nearby.

3.47   ECC will work with each community to ensure that their library service reflects their needs, but ECC's presumption would be:-
  • Each community library holds circa 200 books
  • The books are refreshed at least once a quarter
  • The volunteers contact or meet with an ECC library representative once a fortnight to a month to ensure there are no issues

- Training be offered to volunteers on how to operate the service and how to ensure that the diverse needs of the community are met

3.48 As part of ECC's support in the set-up of a community library, ECC will direct volunteers to additional support available, such as 'The Essex Crowd' crowdsourcing website, 'Essex Activities' event website, and sources of additional funding such as the Local Service Fund and Essex Community Foundation. If the site is looking to improve their internet connection, then ECC will of course steer them towards its Superfast Broadband campaign.

3.49 In addition to the community library initiative Essex Libraries' intention is to expand the already established Home Library Service (where volunteers deliver books to the homes of those with mobility issues) to provide greater access to the book stock. Nine percent of survey respondents expressed interest in volunteering for the Home Library Service, while 12% said they or somebody they knew would be interested in receiving a friends and family membership.

3.50 It is proposed that ECC will also work with Older People's Residential Care Homes, to ensure that they still receive the ECC Library Service appropriately. ECC will work with them to see what would be suitable for their establishment, whether that would be a variation on the community libraries concept, Home Library Service support, training of staff at homes to order books for residents, or other alternatives which provides an efficient service to these homes.

3.51 ECC accepts that some mobile library stops may meet all other criteria, but may be inaccessible to the mobile library vehicles being kept. This is due to the vehicle being too large to access routes to the stop, or a lack of suitable location for the mobile vehicles to park. ECC will work with communities to address this, for example, by establishing a community library in the area.

3.52 Taking all of these approaches together, alongside the work already underway in the current service, ECC is providing creative supplements and substitutes to both the mobile library service, and the static service. This is part of ECCs duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient Library service while ensuring it is as cost effective as possible.

4. **Options**

4.1 **Recommended option** - Implement the proposals contained in the consultation, but change the provision of stops to being 1.5 miles by driving distance away from a library building rather than two miles away and having remaining stops served every three weeks. This will mean servicing 213 stops. This decision would lead to a reduction in annual cost of £254,000 (full year effect), of which £174,000 would be a cashable saving.

4.2 This recommendation will also see the development and expansion of community libraries, the Home Library Service and alternatives for Older Peoples Residential Care Homes as set out in paragraphs 3.42 to 3.51 above.

4.3 **Alternative Option 1** – Implement the proposals contained in the consultation without any changes (ie keep at two miles by driving distance away from library buildings). This would mean servicing 195 stops over a three week cycle. When deciding on the provision of library services ECC is required to take account of evidence of need for those services. As it is possible to mitigate some of the issues raised through the consultation this option is not advised, despite it providing all of the benefits identified pre-consultation. This decision would lead to a reduction in annual cost of £254,000 (full year effect), of which £174,000 would be a cashable saving.

4.4 **Alternative option 2 –** To continue the Mobile Library Service in its current form, and not implement the proposals at all. This would not reflect value for money considering the costs of replacing the fleet (estimated to be £60,000 per vehicle per annum), or reflect the changes which have occurred to people's use of the mobile libraries, meaning that some library stops would be unused. This option would create a financial pressure of around £350,000 from 2018/19.

4.5 **Alternative option 3** – To end the provision of the Mobile Library Service in its entirety. ECC is required, when deciding on the provision of library services, to take account of evidence of need for those services and to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service'. If the mobile library service were ceased entirely it would reduce annual expenditure by approximately £450,000 of which £380,000 would be a cashable saving.

5. Next steps

5.1 The results of this decision will be published and respondents who requested it will be sent a copy of the consultation report and decision.

5.2 If the recommended option is approved –
- Preparations for 2 April 2018 go-live date will be continued to ensure the roll out of the new timetable.
- Individuals or organisations who expressed interest in volunteering or in the development of community libraries.
- We will work with care homes to seek alternative provision.
- We will work with communities to identify whether organisations wish to promote home library services or community libraries.

5.3 ECC will keep the new service under review alongside the provision of mobile libraries.

5.4 ECC will provide support to people who are at potential risk of social isolation caused by the reduction in mobile stops.

6. Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The mobile library service currently operates with an annual budget of approximately £380,000 to pay for the existing fleet of nine vehicles and nine full time drivers. However, with the rising costs of running and maintaining the ageing fleet, forecast annual expenditure has now risen to approximately £450,000.

6.1.2 The recommended proposal would allow the release of seven vehicles, reducing annual expenditure by approximately £254,000 but only presenting a cashable saving of £174,000 due to over spending in the budget.

6.1.3 The libraries budget contains a £2m saving associated with the Community Hubs programme, profiled as follows:

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Saving (£000)	190	790	1,290	1,690	2,000

The stated cashable saving of £174,000 will contribute towards achievement of the 2018/19 target.

6.1.4 In addition to generating financial savings, the proposed reduction to the current mobile fleet means that ECC is not required to expend additional unbudgeted resource on replacing vehicles that have reached end of life, either in the form of capital purchases or of additional annual revenue costs estimated at £50,000 per vehicle (this being the difference between the £60,000 annual lease cost of a new vehicle and the £10,000 current cost), or £350,000 for seven vehicles.

6.1.5 Resources required for the ongoing delivery of the expanded offer relating to community libraries, the Home Library Service and alternatives for Older Peoples Residential Care Homes will be contained within existing library budgets.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 ECC is a library authority under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and is under a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for all individuals who live, work or study within Essex and discharges this duty through the provision of library services, including mobile library services. Case law has determined that comprehensive and efficient service that local authorities are required to provide is a balance between meeting local needs within available resources in a way which is appropriate to the needs to the local community.

6.2.2 ECC has consulted with regards to the proposed changes to the mobile library services.

7. Equality and Diversity implications

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

(a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful

(b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

(c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will have an adverse impact on some people with particular characteristics, which is why mitigations have been discussed in Section 6 of Appendix 1 (Equality Impact Assessment). Mitigation actions have been identified and whilst there will be some adverse impact, we believe that we believe that many of the impacts can be mitigated.

8. List of appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment
8.2 Appendix 2 - Needs Assessment
8.3 Appendices 3a-3e - Consultation Documentation
8.4 Appendix 4 - Report on the final analysis of Consultation Data
8.5 Appendix 4a – Additional comments received during the Consultation period
8.5 Appendix 4b – Consultation report
8.6 Appendix 5 - Community Libraries Briefing
8.7 Appendix 6 – Proposed Mobile Timetable for implementation on 2 April 2018.

9. List of Background papers

9.1 Consultation responses