



# Norfolk County Council

22 July 2022

## Your views on the future of our mobile library service

### Overview

Norfolk County Council continues to face higher costs and demand for services and, this was the case even before the recent rise in inflation. Initial proposals [to save £13 million](#) as part of a £60 million target for next year were considered by councillors on 4<sup>th</sup> July. One of those savings proposals is to reduce the budget for the mobile library service by £200,000 - this is nearly half of the existing budget of £422,000. To make this saving we now have to find ways to run the mobile library service in a different way and potentially reduce the number of routes.

### Why we are consulting

We want to find out how residents' use the mobile libraries, how much they value the service and what elements of the service could change. We want to know people's thoughts about how we could deliver a more modern and efficient mobile library service that's fit for the future.

We are consulting through:

- This online consultation, which is also available as a paper copy via mobile libraries and library branches throughout Norfolk
- Letters to key partners and stakeholders
- Our Norfolk Residents' Panel

We are consulting from Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July to Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September. Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after the 14<sup>th</sup>, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take them into account.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence to help them come to a decision about the future of the mobile library service.

**If you need a copy of this consultation document in a different format please email [haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk), call 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.**

The consultation should take between 10-15 minutes to complete.

## **Personal information, confidentiality and data protection**

We will use any personal information to understand how different groups of people feel about our budget proposals.

We will process any personal information we receive from you in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679), the Data Protection Act 2018 and Norfolk County Council's data protection policy and guidelines. This means that Norfolk County Council will hold your personal data and only use it for the purpose for which it was collected, being this consultation. You can find a copy of our privacy statement at <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/privacy>

We won't identify individuals when reporting back our findings and under our record management policy we will keep this information for five years. We will also, under normal circumstances, not pass your personal data on to anyone else. However, we may be asked under access to information laws to publish or disclose some, or all, of the information you provide in response to this consultation. We will only do this where such disclosure will comply with such relevant information laws which include the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. You can choose not to take part in the consultation, to stop responding at any time, or to ignore any personal questions that you do not want to answer. **By completing and returning this form to Norfolk County Council, you acknowledge that you have read the above statement.**

## Introduction

Norfolk County Council is committed to making Norfolk a county where businesses, organisations and communities continue to thrive together. Our **Better Together, For Norfolk** strategy sets out the Council's five, interlinked, priorities: a vibrant and sustainable economy; better opportunities for children and young people; healthy, fulfilling and independent lives; strong, engaged and inclusive communities; and a greener, more resilient future.

Despite the challenges facing us all throughout 2020 and 2021, we have continued to provide the services which give children and young people the best start in life, support vulnerable and older people, maintain and develop our highways and transport network, provide library, waste disposal and fire services, and work in partnership to grow the economy.

We are delivering all these services in a financial climate of risk and uncertainty, from both service user and provider perspectives. Some of the main challenges we faced before COVID-19 are still present or have been exacerbated, including population changes, social, economic and health inequalities, rising demand for services and support, workforce challenges in key sectors such as the care market, government policy changes, funding reductions and the impact of continued financial constraints. The Council must now plan for the multiple impacts of rising budget pressures, uncertainty over Government funding, and the financial challenges associated with the recovery following COVID-19.

Providing a "comprehensive and efficient" library service is a statutory obligation placed upon the Council under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 for all individuals who live work or study within the county and want to use the service. What was considered "comprehensive and efficient" in the early 1960s has changed thanks to the internet, electronic resources, and social media. In addition to our existing mobile libraries, we provide 47 branch libraries and a range of online and outreach services, including the home library service for residents who are unable to access other offers.

Whilst printed books continue to be important, people now download and read content and share information in different ways and this needs to be factored into the future of our library services. In considering all these changes and developments, we now want to hear your views about how the reduced funding should be used for the future delivery of our mobile library service, recognising that the current offer will not be sustainable.

## **Our current mobile library service offer**

We currently run six mobile libraries that visit more than 500 locations in Norfolk every four weeks. Last year, between April 2021 and March 2022, partly whilst we were still coming out of lockdown, there were 41,000 visits and some 145,000 books borrowed from our mobile libraries. Our vehicles stop outside a variety of places within local communities, these range from playgroups, schools, care homes and traveller sites as well as locations where there is high footfall such as parish halls, pubs and supermarkets. There are currently 1,304 stops and time spent at each stop ranges from 10-15 minutes for most places to around one hour or more in others – the current delivery model is based on agreed principles and adjusted to local need.

Mobile libraries currently offer:

- Books, DVDs and audio books for loan and return
- A place to collect reservations or return items to the wider library service
- General information, advice and signposting to other services
- Help to access online magazines, newspapers, eBooks and eAudio

This summer there are two new replacement vehicles arriving which were commissioned from April 2021 to ensure operational continuity: they will replace two older vehicles that are at end of useful life. These new vehicles have an extended offer and will be equipped to provide public WiFi, internet access via onboard computer/ tablet and an area for children's books and seating. Plans are also in place to loan digital devices as part of our Digital Inclusion Strategy. We currently have a Transit van fitted out with shelves which helps us deliver some of our services and this is due to be replaced by an Electric Vehicle in 2023, supported by funding from the Arts Council England.

## **The future of our service**

The Council wants to save £60 million by 2023-24. This target is the highest we have faced in recent years, so it makes sense to start the process now, with an initial range of savings proposals starting with how our mobile library service can continue to serve residents, particularly those living and working in rural communities. Additional savings proposals for other services identified by the Council may require separate consultation later this year.

With ever-increasing pressures on public sector resources, it is important for local service providers to work together to share resources and investment. Branch libraries offer a wide range of activities and events, supporting job seekers, getting people online, working with children and families, encouraging participation in cultural performances and readings, and learning new skills or gathering information to manage their health and make life choices. With a reduction of £200k, we need to review the operations of our mobile service, for example our mobile library services could work more with partners to deliver some similar services to those found in our branch libraries or increase our use of digital device loans.

This consultation aims to explore:

- What is important to people currently using or wanting to use the service
- How we should prioritise where and for how long a mobile service happens
- Whether we could introduce and make better use of digital services
- Which partners or other services could work with us to improve the rural and mobile library service
- Whether there are local needs and other factors that will help shape delivery

We want to hear your thoughts about the current mobile library services and how a future service based on a reduced spend, with fewer routes and stops, could best serve local communities. The current routes and full details for our mobile library service can be viewed online at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/mobilelibraries](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/mobilelibraries)

**Q1. How often do you use your local mobile library service?**

- Every month (normally every 28 days)
- Every other visit (normally every 56 days)
- Occasionally
- Not sure
- Never

**Q2. What is it that you like about our mobile library service? Please tick (✓) all that apply:**

- It is convenient
- I have no transport to visit a library
- It's a good way to get out and meet people
- Other – please specify

**Q3. What services do you use on the mobile library? Please tick (✓) all that apply:**

- Borrowing books, (including large print and Childrens)
- Borrowing audio books – cassettes or CDs
- Borrowing DVDs
- Help to access online magazines, newspapers, eBooks and eAudio
- Collect reservations of books and items from the wider library service
- Ask for information, help and advice
- Return items borrowed from other libraries in Norfolk

**Q4. If the mobile library was not available how likely would you be to travel to a branch library for these services? Please tick (✓) one answer only:**

Very likely

Somewhat likely

Somewhat unlikely

Very unlikely

Not sure

Please explain why you said this

**Q5. Where is your nearest mobile library stop?**

**Q6. If you know it, please give the postcode of your local mobile library stop? Details can be found online at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/mobilelibraries](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/mobilelibraries)**

**Q7. What do you think are the most important factors when deciding where library services should be provided? Please tick (✓) one answer only:**

In a rural location in Norfolk without transport

In a rural location without other services locally

Near busy places such as supermarkets

Near places such as community centres, parks / play areas

In a location with easy access via car, public transport,  
cycling or walking

Other – e.g. specific needs of local communities to consider

**Q8. What do you think are the most important factors to consider when deciding how long a mobile library visit should be? Please tick (✓) all that apply:**

Time to choose books

Time to collect book reservations

Time to talk to other people and staff

Time to research something online or complete an online transaction

Time to read with children in dedicated space for families

Other – please specify

**Q9. Would you, or members of your household, friends and neighbours like to try accessing more information online via one of the following? Please tick (✓) all that apply:**

Borrowing a tablet or other device for reading

Borrowing a laptop or tablet to help get you online at home

Assistance and support to help you access online services

Assistance with using your mobile phone or digital device

**Q10. If we were to reduce the number of routes, how far would you travel to visit a mobile library? Please tick (✓) one answer only:**

I would travel:

1-2 miles

2-3 miles

3-4 miles

4-5 miles

Over 5 plus

No, I would choose to stop visiting any library  
if I had to travel further

**Q11. If your current local mobile library stop was unavailable, would you travel to your nearest local branch library? Please tick (✓) one answer only:**

Yes

Maybe

No

Not sure

**Q12. If we were to reduce routes, in your opinion how should we prioritise which routes and stops to keep?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Reduce routes based on usage  
(i.e look at which routes are used the least)

Reduce routes in the areas that have closer proximity to other services  
(i.e urban / town areas)

Reduce routes that have good broadband and internet connection  
(i.e so that people can use our online services)

Other – please write here

**Q13. Would you consider visiting a stop further away from you if the length of time at the stop was a minimum of 30 minutes?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Yes

Maybe

No

Not sure

**Q14. How likely are you to use our digital and online services if we were to reduce the mobile service?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Very likely

Somewhat likely

Somewhat unlikely

Very unlikely

Not sure

Please explain why you said this

**Q15. Which, if any, of the following activities would interest you *if* services could be provided alongside the mobile library service? Please tick (✓) all that apply:**

Basic health checks such as blood pressure or hearing aid checks

Information about managing your money or other life advice

Healthy eating and lifestyle choices

Shared Reading and / or other reading activity

Baby weigh facilities and early years support

Share a cuppa and a chat with other customers

Support with digital skills and online transactions

Other - please specify

**Q16. Which other organisations could we consider working with to deliver services to rural locations?**

**Q17. Are you aware of the Home Library Service that delivers books to your door for those who are less able to get to a library? See [www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/library-services/home-library](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/library-services/home-library)**

Yes

No

**Q18. Now that you know about the Home Library services, would you use it?**

Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Yes

Maybe

No

Not sure

**Q19. Is there anything else you want to tell us about the mobile library service that you think might be useful?**

## About you

The next few pages will ask you for some information about yourself.

Remember all questions are optional. Only give the information you feel comfortable giving.

### Q20. What is your name?

Please write your answer in the box:

### Q21. Are you responding as...? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| An individual / member of the public        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A family                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On behalf of a voluntary or community group | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On behalf of a statutory organisation       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On behalf of a business                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A Norfolk County Councillor                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A district or borough councillor            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A town or parish councillor                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A Norfolk County Council employee           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Prefer not to say                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Q22. If you are responding on behalf of another organisation, what is the name of the organisation, group or business?

Please write your answer in the box:

### Q23. Are you...? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer to self-describe (please specify below)
- Prefer not to say

If you prefer to self-describe please specify here:

**Q24. How old are you?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 or older
- Prefer not to say

**Q25. Do you have any long-term illness, disability or health problem that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

**Q26. How would you describe your ethnic background?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

White British

White Irish

White other

Mixed / multiple ethnic group

Asian or Asian British

Black / African / Caribbean / Black British

Prefer not to say

Other ethnic background - please describe below

**Q27. What is your first language?**

Please write your answer in the box:

**Q28. What is the first part of your postcode? (e.g. NR4)**

Please write your answer in the box:

**Q29. Which District / Borough /City do you live in? Please tick (✓) one box**

- |                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Breckland                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Broadland                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Great Yarmouth              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Kings Lynn and West Norfolk | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| North Norfolk               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Norwich                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| South Norfolk               | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Q30. Where did you hear about this Consultation?**

- |                                      |                          |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Social Media                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visiting my mobile library           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Local Media (Newspaper/Radio etc)    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Through my town/parish council       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Through the Norfolk Residents' Panel | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Through an email I received          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The Norfolk County Council Website   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A poster I saw at my local library   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| From a friend                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other, please write below:



## **How we will make our decision and report back to you**

We will take a report about the findings of this consultation to the Council's Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> November. Final decisions on the council's budget will be made next February.

Our county councillors will consider the consultation responses we receive very carefully. In particular, they will take into account:

- The impact of any proposal on individuals, groups or communities and in particular on people identified as having 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. As well as this equality impact assessment, councillors will consider the impact of proposals on rural areas
- The views of people and stakeholders consulted
- The evidence of need and what is proven to work effectively and well
- The financial and legal positions and any constraints at the time
- Any potential alternative options, models or ideas for making the savings.

### **You can send back a paper feedback form to:**

Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

However, if you want to help the council save money please use a stamp and send to this address: Stakeholder and Consultation Team, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH.

You may wish to keep a copy of your response to our consultation for your own records.

**Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.**



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please email us at [haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk) or contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.