



"Not for self"

date

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Re:Rural Mobile Library Service

Much has been written in the press recently about savings that need to be made by Shropshire County Council. With very little information available about how these savings are to be achieved, there has been a significant amount of speculation. The impact of potential headline savings figures have been described as "catastrophic". As a large rural parish we are concerned that any savings may include a reduction in the already limited mobile library service available to our residents

Oswestry Rural Parish is a geographically large civil parish recorded in the 2021 census as covering an area of 62 square kilometres (24 sq mi), with a population of 4,800. For residents unable to access the branch library in Oswestry the only library service comes from the mobile library which visits three locations every two weeks for a total of 55 minutes (*Appendix 1 for details*). Access to Oswestry Library for many residents is made more difficult as a result of the sparsity of rural transport services

We understand that responsibility for the library service moved from Culture, Leisure and Tourism to Health in the most recent restructuring, though there is some uncertainty about whether this is a permanent change. We see the move as a positive one highlighting the contribution of library services to health and social care in the county. However, notwithstanding the positive ambitions set out in the "Shropshire Library Strategy 2022-27", it seems that local authorities see library services as an easy target. In the last month alone nine local authorities have announced cost saving changes (*Appendix 2 for details*). It is estimated that since 2010 50% of total funding for library services nationally has been lost.

While recognising that the cost per loan associated with mobile libraries is the highest in the library service, we call on Shropshire County Council not to reduce mobile library services to Oswestry Rural Parish any further and to commit to a publicity campaign, in conjunction with partner organisations, to encourage greater use of both the mobile library and home library services.

Oswestry Rural Parish Council

cc: Councillor Joyce Barrow
Paula Moreson, Assistant Director for Integration and Healthy Population

Appendix 1 - Oswestry Rural Parish Mobile Library Service

Trefonen Barley Mow Car Park	35 minutes from 9:05 am to 9:40 am every 2 weeks
Maesbury Marsh Marshfields	10 minutes from 13:35 pm to 13:45 pm every 2 weeks
Redwith Canal Bridge	10 minutes from 11:20 am to 11:30 am every 2 weeks

Appendix 2 - Recent national library service changes

- Aberdeen - Central Library to remain, others to become "community hubs"
- Birmingham - More details on £2.3m cut: 10 libraries to remain full-time; 14 to be "part-time", 4 to close and "co-locate", 7 to close if others do not pay for them, 1 (Spring Hill) to definitely close.
- Bradford - Holme Wood Library taken over by community enterprise.
- Coventry - Four libraries to close and to move to co-locations.
- Croydon - Four libraries (Bradmore Way, Farm Fields, Canterbury Road and Wickham Road) confirmed as closing.
- Derbyshire - £910k cut between 2024 and 2029: 10% cut in opening hours, reduce mobile/home library service, co-locations, volunteers.
- Newport - £159k cut over 2 years. Pill Library closed. £46k cut in book fund (now £136k). Bettws and Malpas libraries to move into co-locations.
- Westmorland and Furness - Ulverston Library to close: library services to be moved to The Coro.
- York - £600k cut to York Libraries in 2025/6