

**Draft Library Development Strategy 2013 – 2028
Consultation Responses (Phase 2)**

Full public consultation took place during the period 10th June 2013 to 8th September 2013.

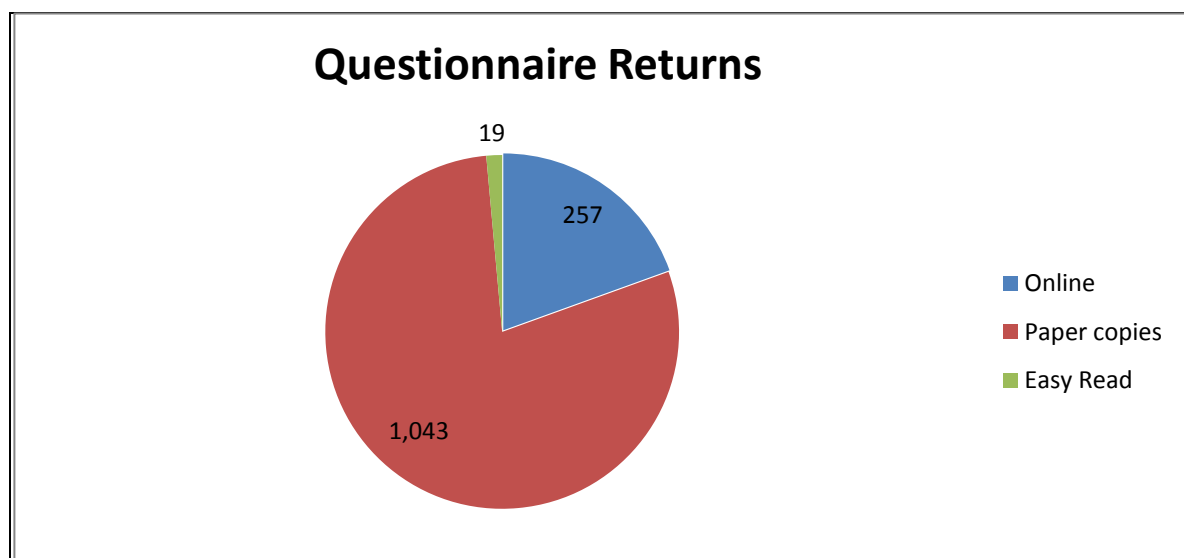
The consultation booklet was made available in both hard copy and electronic format and was accessed by the public in the following ways:

- 5,600 paper copies of the booklet distributed via the Southend-on-Sea Library Branch Network
- Approximately 80,000 copies made available through Outlook magazine and distributed to each household in the borough from the week commencing 21st July 2013
- A further 250 paper copies of an Easy Read version of the questionnaire (developed in consultation with users of learning disability services)
- Electronically via the Council’s online consultation portal.

Further awareness of the consultation was raised through writing to each secondary, infant and primary school in the borough, various local media articles, posters at 50 bus stops around the borough, attendance at meetings of local community groups (e.g. Southend Blind Welfare Organisation, Belfairs Gardens Residents Association) and attendance at various community events throughout the summer.

A total of 1,300 direct responses to the questionnaire have been received:

- 257 online
- 1,043 paper copies
- 19 responses to the Easy Read version



In addition direct responses to the questionnaire we also received letters from local schools, residents associations, Leigh Town Council, Friends of Kent Elms and UNISON, some of which have been in the form of a petition.

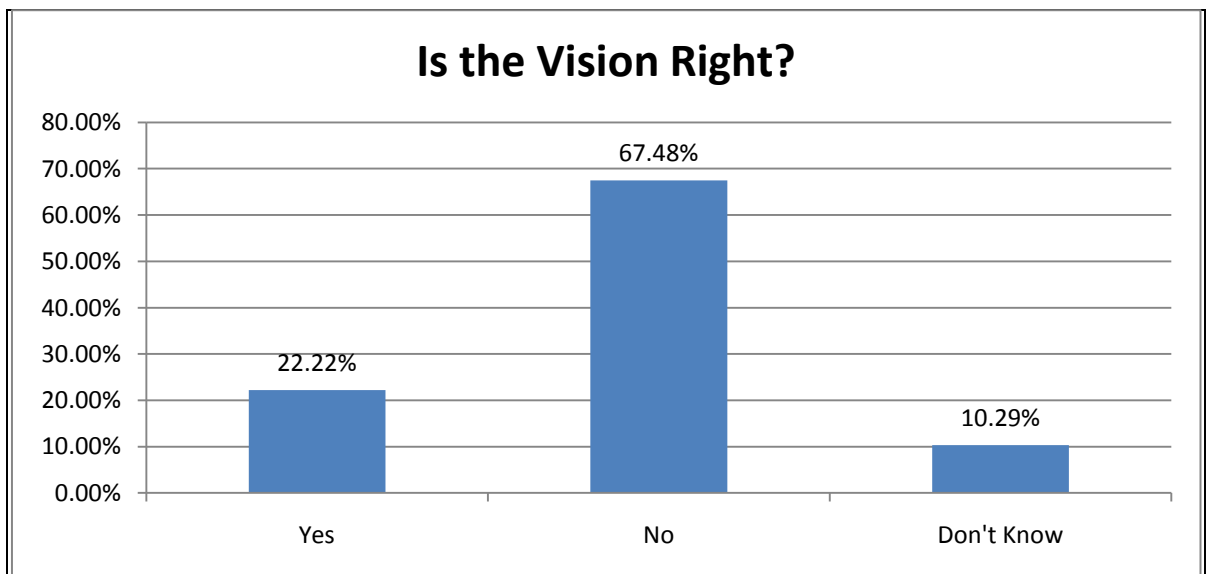
In general:

Respondents were principally concerned about whether any changes would affect their local library, with worries about closures, reduction in opening hours and loss of staff frequently expressed.

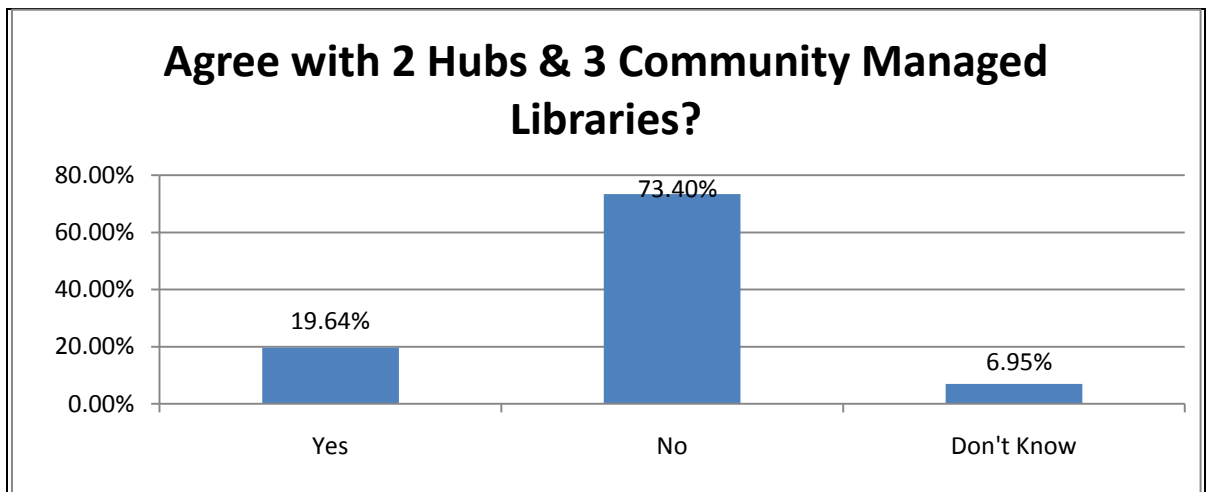
- A fair number of respondents expressed ideological opposition to any change to the Library Service and suggestions that the changes were being instigated as a result of the investment in the Forum.
- There was some suspicion of the Council's motives, with a fear that the proposed introduction of community managed libraries was a smokescreen to enable the Council to make reductions in the branch network enforcing closures 'through the back door' .
- A small number of respondents suggested that changes could be introduced to the various charges made by the service to bring in additional revenue.
- There is support from members of the community to volunteer within libraries; however, comments received indicate that there is a reticence in accepting complete responsibility for managing branch libraries.

The headline results to the individual questions within the consultation are as follows:

Vision - 22.22% of respondents agreed with the vision, with 67.48% disagreeing and a further 10.29% undecided.

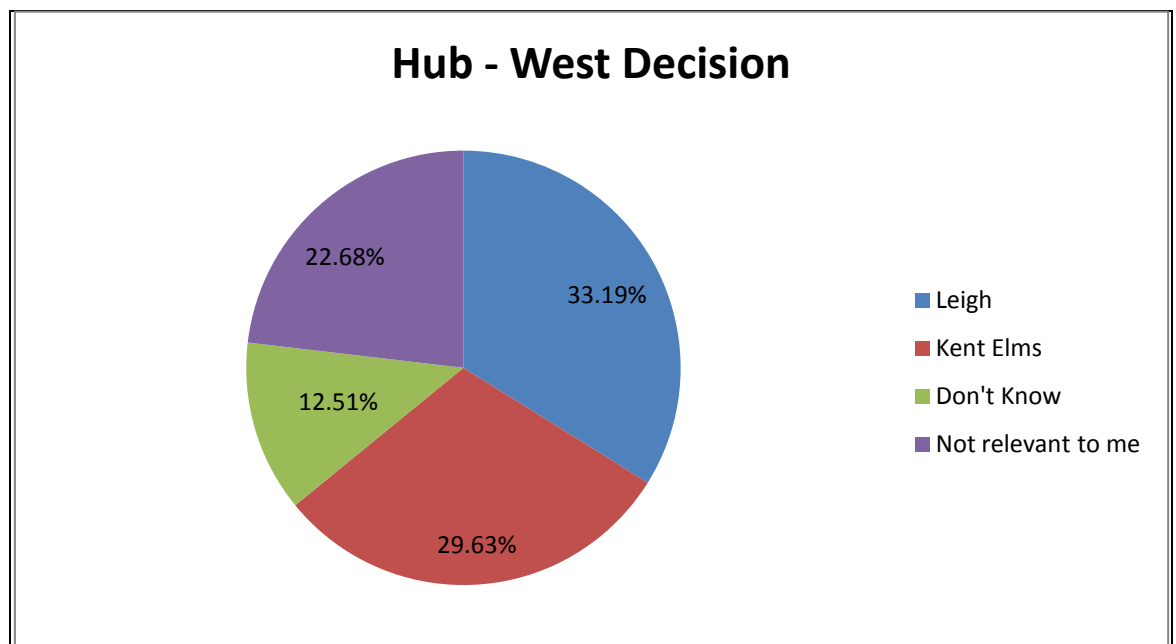


The principle of 2 hub libraries and 3 community libraries is favoured by approximately 19.64% of respondents whilst 73.4% disagreed and 6.95% were undecided.



It is felt that the delivery mechanism of the vision (through hubs and community libraries) has had some level of influence on people's responses to the question of the vision for the service, and therefore it is recommended that the vision is maintained as it is but further thought be given to how that vision will be delivered.

Hub Library in the West – from the responses received the breakdown for this is as follows:



Information to support choice

Many respondents expressed the opinion that they did not think the choice was fair and that both communities served by the branches in Leigh and Kent Elms deserved to retain their branch library and for each of them to be staffed by council employed, professional staff. People pointed out that both libraries served two very different communities and residents were very unlikely to use the hub library if it was not in their own community.

It was clear that people still felt the consultation was about selecting which library to close and the concept of volunteer run libraries was not very

welcome. People expressed concerns with the perceived quality of service that would be delivered in a Community Managed Library – many stating it would be a ‘downgraded’ library and questioned the long-term viability of this type of service.

“A community library is not a library it is a book swap. A library is only a library if staffed by professional librarians.”

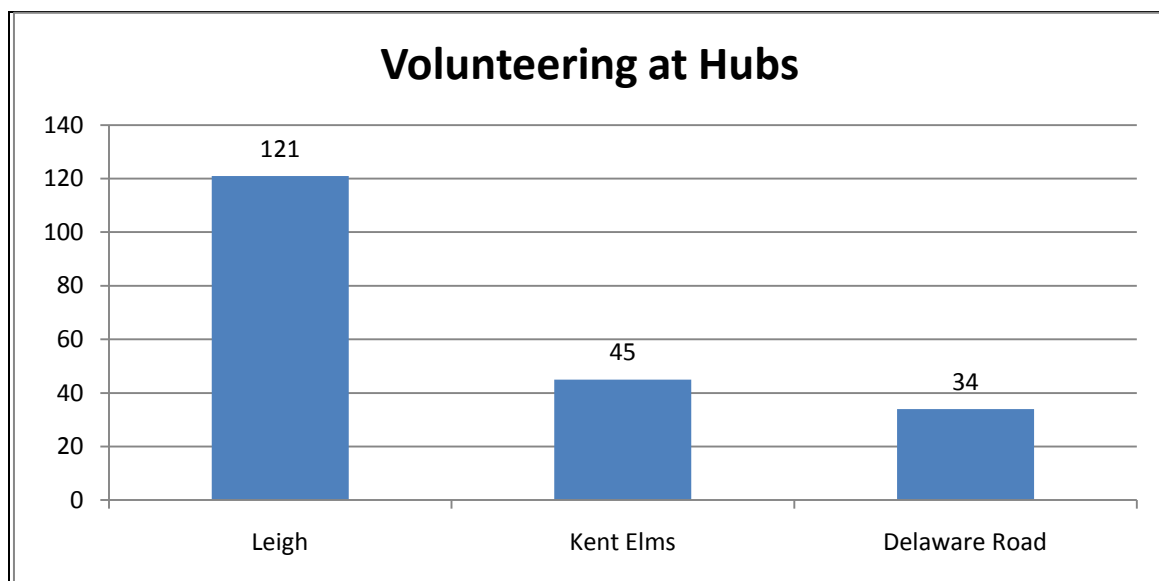
For those who did provide supporting information for their preference for either Leigh or Kent Elms, the main reasons were:-

Reasons in favour of Leigh	Reasons in favour of Kent Elms
Highest performing branch	School use – several special needs schools in the vicinity
The beautiful building - many people expressed their love of the building and desire to keep it as a library in its present location	Far fewer community facilities within the Eastwood area – library currently used as base for many services
Combining a visit with the library gardens and children’s playground	More deprived / needy area
Community Hub	Less services available within Eastwood – perception that library is one of the only services left.
Availability of parking	Less social capital
Surrounding facilities (shops, cafes etc)	Availability of parking behind the library
Excellent staff	Impact on local shops
Risk of alienating the people of Leigh as other services removed from the town (post office / sorting office)	Poor transport links to Leigh
Poor transport links with Kent Elms	A127 seen as a big barrier
A127 seen as a big barrier	Excellent staff

Appendix 1 provides a complete breakdown of all comments received. As previously stated, in addition to the responses to the questionnaire, letters of support in favour of one location or another as well as petitions from Leigh Town Council and Friends of Kent Elms Library have also been received. These have been kept separate from the consultation analysis as they are predominantly single issue responses in relation to the West Hub decision. The Friends of Kent Elms requested that their petition is taken into consideration by the Cultural Advisory working Party and did not wish it to be discussed separately at Full Council. Leigh Town Council has requested that their petition is debated at the next full council meeting; which will take place on 17th October 2013.

Volunteering at hub locations

200 people have indicated that they would be prepared to volunteer their time at a council managed hub library, with the breakdown as follows:



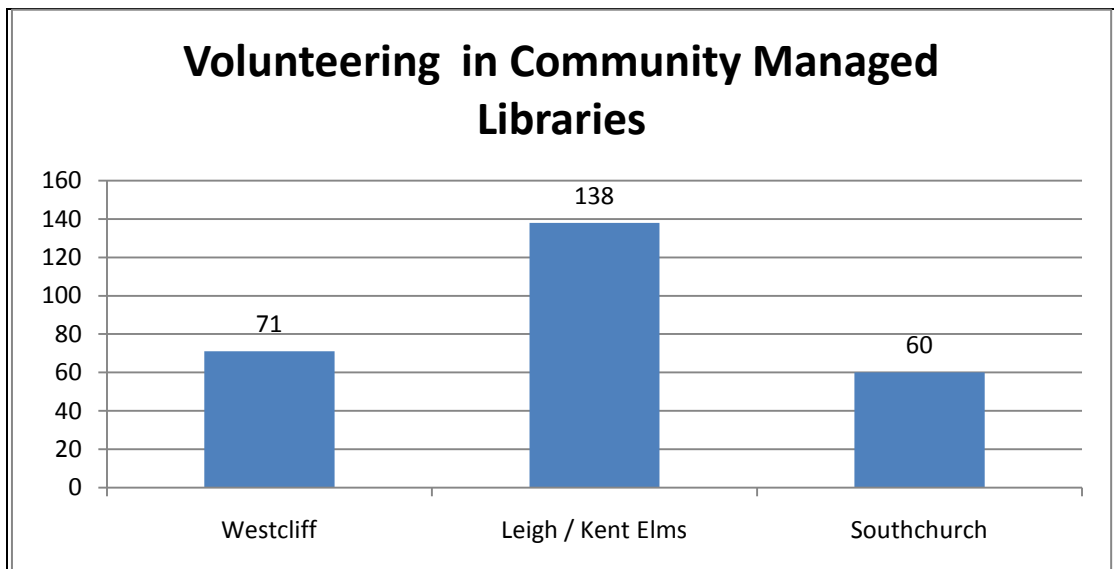
Looking at the responses for Leigh / Kent Elms, this does seem to support the perception that there is more capacity for volunteers to be drawn from the residents of Leigh with them being almost 3 times more likely / able to volunteer than resident of Kent Elms and 3.5 times than Shoebury residents.

Volunteering in Community Managed Libraries

275 people have indicated that they supported the idea of community managed libraries with a further 126 currently undecided.

Encouragingly from this 121 people said that they would volunteer at a community managed library with a further 145 stating 'maybe' they would consider it; this number is higher than anticipated.

It should be noted that the majority of people who stated they would volunteer, tempered their response by advising that they would do so only if there were paid staff in the branch. A reluctance to take on the full responsibility of running and managing a library themselves was expressed by many. Nevertheless, people were willing to provide details of which location(s) they would consider volunteering at and many also provided their contact details.



Community Groups to take on responsibility

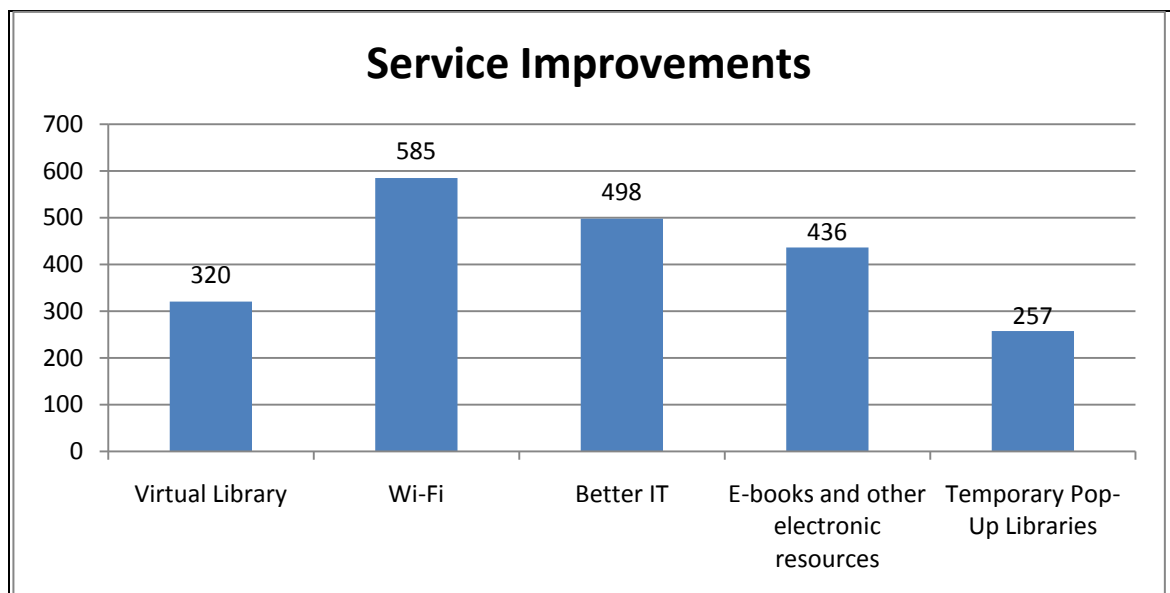
Very few details of groups were put forward in response to this question – some local community groups stated that they did not have capacity to take on this function; this includes the Leigh Society, Leigh Town Council and Westborough Community Association. U3A was a group that was suggested by some respondents.

It is clear that work with local community groups would need to be carried out if the option of Community Managed Libraries is to be pursued. This work is likely to take the form of clarification and assurance on the level of support that would be provided by the council.

Service Improvements

Out of all the service improvements suggested, people ranked the provision of Wi-Fi as their top preference, followed by Better IT and then E-books and other electronic resources.

This multiple response question was answered by 961 respondents



245 respondents also took the opportunity to express a level of dissatisfaction with current IT particularly in relation to the catalogue, internet downtime (especially as this counted towards their free hour) and difficulty in accessing audio books. See appendix 2 for full details of comments received. Respondents were not very clear on what virtual library services would be and also were not sure about Temporary Pop-up Libraries.

Given these responses it is felt that priority should be given to installing Wi-Fi across the entire branch network, in addition to improving IT and access to other electronic resources.

Appendix 3 provides details of other ideas and suggestions for the service.

Other considerations

This question was asked to try and ascertain any other reasons / impacts that the proposals would have on individuals that should be taken into consideration by the working party when making their decision.

In general responses to this were largely around access issues; both in terms of transport and affordability of transport / parking charges. Other issues raised were around the proximity to local schools and mobility issues for family carers.

Appendix 4 provides a breakdown of additional factors that may need to be considered.