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The Unofficial Guide to the BCC Libraries Consultation

Because libraries are a statutory service (that's right, mandated by law), Birmingham City Council (BCC) is running a consultation on their proposals to close libraries, cut staffing levels, transfer buildings and services, and create 'hub' libraries. The consultation runs from 4 April to 17 July 2024 and consists, so far, of:

- a long survey
- online sessions for each library
- in-person drop-in sessions for each constituency

This guide focuses on the survey. It discusses the Council's proposals and our concerns with those proposals before explaining the different sections of the consultation survey.

The guide is based on our reading of the survey and the accompanying consultation documents:

1. [Libraries Consultation Launch Pack](#)
2. [Birmingham Strategic Framework for Library Services \(draft\) - 2024 - 2029](#)
3. [Library Needs Assessment appendix document](#)

The survey can be found here: www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/adults-communities/lc24/

You can find links to the documents here:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50306/commissioners_intervention_and_improvement/2903/consultations_to_help_us_reshape/2

Their [Library Needs Assessment dashboard](#) contains additional data and analysis.

You can ask the consultation team questions and give feedback on the Council's proposals directly by emailing LibrariesPublicConsultation@birmingham.gov.uk.

Please let us know if this survey was useful or if you think there's something we've missed: birminghamloveslibraries@gmail.com

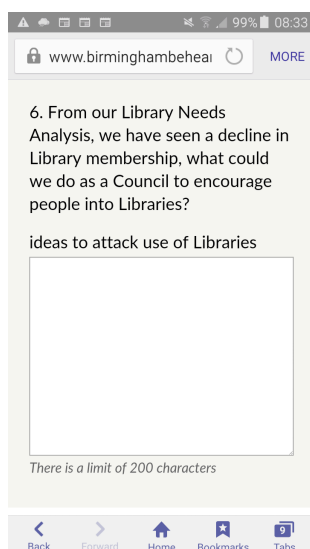
Why did we write this guide?

Well, we love libraries. And the kind of libraries we love the most are open, public and professionally staffed libraries. And we want to help people tell the Council exactly that: Birmingham loves libraries! Don't close our public libraries!

Although the survey is very long and boring, we don't want people to give up. Express your opinions to the council. This can include telling them you don't understand their recommendations or want more information. And if you're feeling as confused, frustrated, or angry as we are, feel free to let it all out in the survey.

Most of all, say how much we like our libraries and our librarians. Let the council receive an avalanche of love letters to our libraries and librarians.

Before we dive into this consultation, one request. If you are not a member of a library, go and [become a member](#) before you do the consultation. If you have not been to a library in a while, go and visit one. Remind yourself what is at stake.



What's the consultation about?

At its heart, this is a consultation on how to cut the library service, how to reduce it, and how to have third parties (including you as a volunteer!) running it. It is a consultation designed to delegitimise the model of public libraries we have now because there is no willingness from our government to fund this statutory service.

Perhaps it was a sloppy mistake, but when we logged into the consultation survey early on the morning of its launch, we found this text underneath question 6: 'ideas to attack use of libraries'. Even if it was a mistake, it did not feel out of place in a consultation designed to justify profound cuts to our library service.

Libraries as a whole do not count for much as a percentage of the council budget, but as with all our services, they are being targeted for deep cuts. The Council is merging the Library Service with the Neighbourhood Advice and Information Service. The target cut is £2,300,000 from the two budgets: the current community libraries budget of £5,370,000 and the NAIS budget of £350,000. This is a cut of 40%.

This isn't just about Birmingham. Across the UK, [public spending on libraries has almost halved since 2010](#) (Laura Kelly, *The Big Issue*, 2023). Over 760 have closed in that time. But when communities have spoken up and fought back, some libraries have been saved, kept open, and kept public and professionally staffed.

The Council's Proposal: Hubs, co-location, and volunteer-led libraries

Through this consultation, the Council has presented 4 options for the future of the library service, all of which involve the 40% reduction in funding. All are deeply problematic:

1. Retain 35 community library buildings, but staff would work 0.5 to 1.5 days a week. Some buildings would close anyway due to lack of budget for required building repairs.
2. Vastly reduce community library provision to 6 libraries. (*This is so few libraries it seems like it would not meet the statutory requirement for a 'comprehensive and efficient library service'.*)
3. 11 Community Library Hubs including Library of Birmingham. Supplemented with community groups and co-located opportunities (unclear here what this means). (*This was the option publicised in the media earlier this year.*)
4. Their recommended option: Mix of full-time and part-time community hubs providing library services and early intervention and prevention services. Supplemented by co-located services (libraries which are run by the Council but moved into other community spaces) and community-run library services. (*But no information on how many hubs is given!*)

The consultation is designed to lead people to support BCC's recommended option, No. 4. This recommended option is vague in terms of how many libraries will remain open, be hubbed, or closed.

Here, in their own words, is more about their recommended option:

Move from current 35 Community Libraries to a mixed delivery model of:

- ❖ *BCC run Community Library hubs open 5 days per week providing library and early intervention and prevention services.*
- ❖ *BCC Community Library hubs open part-time hours providing library and early intervention and prevention services.*
- ❖ *BCC staff co-located with partners/community groups providing library services.*
- ❖ *Community groups running library services via Community Asset Transfer.*

"Based on current information on community interest and co-location opportunities, we estimate a combination of the council run and community led provision might secure circa 25 building based library services. This figure may change."

This proposal keeps a handful of libraries open while transferring the rest to third parties. That intention is clear from the beginning of this consultation. When you begin the form, you are asked who you are answering as. One category is "individual willing to run a library". A large chunk of the survey is gathering info on who else could run the libraries, i.e. prepping for 'community asset transfer'. That's right: you would have to pay your council tax and work to run your local library!

What are our main concerns with the council's recommended option?

- 1. Fewer libraries:** By vastly reducing the number of council-run libraries, it neglects our long-established legal right to a 'comprehensive and efficient library service' (Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964).
- 2. Further to travel:** Fewer libraries would increase the distance people have to travel to libraries in a city with limited public transport options. This would have the biggest impact on the elderly, people with disabilities, parents/carers of young children, young people, and people on low incomes. Even if a 'community hub' is open in the evening, if it requires a bus ride or two, or a 40 minute walk, will people go?
- 3. What is a Community Library hub?** There is scant detail about what community library hubs will look like. BCC suggests community library hubs will act as "platforms for a wider range of positive interactions", offering "all the established library services" and acting as "centres of health and wellbeing, benefits, and employment support". This sounds great in theory, but we want more detail. While co-location (having lots of different services in one building) could work, it requires enough space, staff, and "needs to be carefully designed to ensure that the library service is not overwhelmed by other services, and that the services are complementary" ([Arts Council 2017](#)). We want to know: which buildings could accommodate all of this? How will confidentiality and safeguarding requirements of some services be met? How much space will be given to library services? How will these hubs be staffed?
- 4. Fragmenting our city library service:** BCC's proposal would fragment what is now a unified library service. Of particular concern is the council's proposal to hand over a significant number of libraries to community ownership and management. Because of data protection rules, it may be difficult for libraries run by community groups to interface with council-run library's loan services. So what book stock would community libraries be able to offer? In the consultation documents, BCC notes how at community-run libraries, people could "access a quality library offer, *potentially* including library stock, IT and free Wi-Fi." When does a library stop being a library? When you don't have a librarian? When books are optional?
- 5. Volunteer-run services face challenges with sustainability:** Running a library is hard. The UK government's own research highlights concerns with the sustainability of volunteer-run solutions in the long-run. A report on community libraries raised the problem that many depended on retirees who, over time, reduced their volunteering time. Government figures show that levels of volunteering are at record lows ([Jessel 2023](#)). Volunteers themselves emphasise that running a library is hard.
- 6. Increased inequality:** There is also little info on how BCC will fulfil their aim of ensuring their library service targets the city's most deprived areas when there are fewer libraries (see problem #1 above). And will more deprived communities have resources to run their own library? Won't this plan add more strain on community organisations already doing so much? How "resilient" do people have to be? Why do we have to run our own public services?

The Consultation Survey

The survey is here:

<https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/adults-communities/lc24/consultation/>

Or in hard copy at your local library (yes, the font is tiny).

It has four main sections:

- Section 1. (Q1-19): Your use of Birmingham libraries**
- Section 2 (Q20-29): Libraries of the Future: Community Hubs**
- Section 3. (Q30-43): Community Asset Transfers**
- Section 4 (Q44-49): The Vision for Birmingham's Libraries**
- Section 5: (Q50-66): Basic info about you, the respondent**

Section 1. This part (Q1-19) is about your use of Birmingham libraries

Page 1: Tell us how you use the library (questions 1-6)

This page is relatively straightforward. In question 1, you select who you are – choices include not only the usual “I am a resident” or “I am a library user”, but also “I am a volunteer” (all the time?) and “I am an individual interested in running a library” (anyone guess where this survey is going?).

Answer the questions, but bear in mind, there is no place where they invite you to say what you like about your library. It's all quite negative. If you are a library member, you are not invited to say why. It's only if you are NOT a member or if you never visit a library that you are asked why not.

We invite you to use the text boxes to rebel:

- For Question No. 2, in the box, write: “I am a library member. I am a library member because...(show some love for our libraries)”
- Question No. 4: “I visit my library weekly because...(show some love for our libraries)”
- Question No. 5: “I have used the library in the last 12 months very often/weekly because...(say why you use it and what you like about your library)”

In Question No. 6, asking what they can do to encourage library usage, we recommend noting:

- Previous rounds of cuts, reduced hours and staffing have hurt library usage
- BCC should make sure everyone knows what is on offer in their local library, for example that they can borrow books from anywhere in the city by placing a reservation.
- Any other good ideas you wise library user have

Page 2: Your library use.

This page (Q7-9) is more about the services you use at the library.

Q7. How often do you use any of the following services provided by a Birmingham Community Library? (Please select ONE per row)

- Make sure you check a box for each line or the system won't let you proceed with the survey.
- Feel free to add in the 'Other' box things like 'read' or if you're a parent, 'read with my child', or whatever other activities you like doing that aren't listed
- They have included "informal learning" which we assume happens every time you go into a library (or anywhere else in life...), so please say this happens a lot!

Q8. 8. Overall, which of the following do you consider to be most important? (Please select UP TO FIVE only)

- Feel free to add in the 'Other' box things like 'read' or if you're a parent, 'read with my child', or whatever other activities you like doing that aren't listed

Page 3: Your library use

This page (Q10) asks you to choose which library you use the most.

Page 4: Your library use

Questions 11-14 are about how you travel to the library and when you like to go. These are important because their proposed option would mean many people have to travel much further to their local library.

Q11. How do you normally travel to the library?

- We suggest emphasising that many of us walk to our local libraries.
- You can check multiple options. Again, we think emphasising walking and public transport use is important because it is people who use those modes of transport or who have mobility challenges that will suffer the most if local libraries are closed.

Questions 15-19 are about the Birmingham Libraries website. What's that? It's where you can reserve and renew books, find info about your libraries...Since they don't put the link, here it is: <https://birmingham.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/WPAC/HOME>.

Please note, you have to answer Q17, even if you don't use the website because otherwise the system will stop you from proceeding.

Section 2 (Q20-29): Libraries of the Future: Community Hubs

This section is about THE FUTURE and the Council's proposals.

First, BCC wants your opinions on their "Community Hub Proposal". They want you to read the supporting document ([here](#) or printed out in your local library – the hub proposal is covered from p. 28 onwards in their document). We summarise it below.

What's this "Community Hub Proposal"?

First, they want to develop a "**mixed delivery model**". This means there would be some libraries which are "community hubs", some libraries which are run by the Council but moved into ("co-located") other community spaces, and other libraries which are taken over by community groups.

In more detail:

There would be a handful of "**community hubs**" offering library services open 5 days a week and others open less than that.

How many? They don't tell us.

What's a community hub?

- They explain that hubs will include not just the services our libraries already provide, but other services like Adult Education Services and the Neighbourhood Advice and Information Service. There is little detail, however, on how this will be implemented.
- They explain the network of hubs will offer "variety of spaces", some open on a full time (5 days) and others on a part time basis.
- There are vague warm and fuzzy goals, like creating a "universal space", "warm, welcoming spaces for people to socialise and call their own" and "something for everybody and a place to be". They "aim to empower, motivate, and unite individuals by fostering knowledge, self-reliance, and innovation." Sounds nice, but short on explanation of how this will happen.

There will be "**community co-location links**" where BCC staff provide library services from a non-council run building like family hubs, community centres, schools, sheltered accommodation, faith and community settings, and residential and nursing homes.

Finally, there will be "**community asset transfers**" where community/voluntary organisations own and manage a community library building from where a library service "could" be delivered with support from the council. These groups will then typically be responsible for the running of the building and the associated costs.

For questions in this section, we recommend writing feedback in the boxes.

20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Co-locating services within the Library Community Hubs proposal? (Please select ONE only)

We suggest mentioning in the box that the proposals are unclear, making it hard to answer this question. Do they mean co-location of services in BCC-run hubs? Or do they mean having BCC-run library services in other non-council run buildings?

Also, while co-location of services can work, we want to know: which buildings could accommodate all of this? How will confidentiality requirements of some services be met? How much space will be given to library services? How will these hubs be staffed, especially if staff numbers are cut in both library services and Neighbourhood Advice and Information Services?

21. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the mixed delivery proposal? (Please select ONE only) Note: the mixed delivery approach is described in our 'Libraries Consultation Pack ':

Here we recommend you:

- Express your concern with how ill-explained their mixed delivery proposal is. Again, how can we evaluate this proposal without knowing how many hubs there would be?
- Express your concern with the way their mixed delivery proposal creates a fragmented library system and includes handing over some libraries to be run by community/voluntary organisations.
 - The UK government's own research highlights concerns with the sustainability of volunteer-run solutions in the long-run.
 - There is little info on how BCC will fulfil their aim of ensuring their library service targets the city's most deprived areas when there are fewer libraries.

22. Which of the following options, if any, do you think Birmingham City Council should consider for the library you use most often? (Please select all that apply)

We think this is a ridiculous question, but we recommend selecting the box that the library should be a "Council-run Full-time Community Library Hub". When it asks "Please give the reason for your answer", say something like: I want my library to be open, public and run by trained librarians. I want all community libraries to remain open, public and run by trained librarians.

23. Which of the following would be of most interest to you at a Library Community Hub?

Check whichever options you like but remember you can add things in the 'other' box. We recommend adding whatever things you currently do at your library that are not listed here, including "a place to sit and read" or "a trained librarian". For those of you who visit the library with children, "a place to browse books, sit and read with my child".

24. What is more important to you? Rank 1-4, (1 being most important, 4 being least important).

They are asking which is more important - more services, more days, more hours, or closer to home. We recommend emphasising the importance of "Having access to a library resource close to where I live"!

25. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the mixed delivery proposals will safeguard a future for Birmingham's Community Library Service? (Please select ONE only)

We are dubious that the mixed delivery proposals will safeguard a future for the library service. They will fragment it, reduce it, and hand some of it over to volunteer/community groups. And there seems to be little guarantee that it won't be reduced once again in the next round of cuts.

26. The Council will now have less funding for libraries than it had previously. If the overall spending on the libraries budget must be reduced, which areas do you think are the most appropriate to be reducing spending on?

We recommend writing: It is hard to answer this question without more detailed information on the budget for library services.

27. Do you have any suggestions for anything we have not considered in our proposal? (Our proposal included Community Library Hubs, Co locations, Community Led Library, Virtual Library, Library at Home, and Mobile Library offer)?

In the box "Alternative suggestion for my Library", we suggest writing: Keep my library open, public and professionally staffed.

In the box "Alternative suggestions for the Library Service", we suggest writing:

- Don't close libraries. Keep our libraries open, public and staffed by trained librarians.
- Funding library services properly(!)
- We think that BCC's proposals are based on minimal research and risk breaching their statutory duty to provide a library service. We recommend the council conduct a proper analysis of the value libraries add to our communities, a cost-benefit analysis of proposed cuts, and a thorough feasibility study on different options.

28. Do you have any suggestions for how the Community Library Hub concept and mixed delivery approach could be improved? My ideas:

The Community Library Hub concept and mixed delivery approach needs to be explained in more detail (for example, how many hubs would there be?) before I can judge it or improve it.

29. Do you have any alternative options that we could consider, taking into account the financial savings that are required? My options to be considered:

- How can a consultation on a statutory service have no option to not have such drastic cuts?
- How come our council tax has gone up by 10% and yet our libraries budget is being slashed like this?
- Libraries are very good value for money. Won't the £2 million saving just result in greater costs elsewhere in future?

Section 3: Community Asset Transfers

This is where the survey gets strange -- suddenly you are being asked if you'd like to run your own library! The survey reads:

“One of the options is the reduction of community libraries operated by the Council.

If that proposal was adopted, further issues would arise as to whether the Council works with community bodies to achieve community-led provision for example through Community Asset Transfers.

To gather more information and views on what that option may look like, we are asking to hear from any individuals or organisations with a social purpose that would like to be involved. We would also like to know about potential co-location sites and volunteering opportunities.”

Not one but all of the options the Council has put forward reduce the number of community libraries -- even Option 1, as they say libraries will close because there will not be sufficient budget for them.

Question 30 thus asks if you are interested in being involved with this process of community asset transfer. You get to answer more questions if you are! We've listed them below so you can see them even if you don't choose to answer this section. We think they reveal two problems with the council's proposal.

First, it is problematic to have this section in the consultation when the Council has not yet run a consultation on whether users of the library service agree with the idea of community-run libraries. If a group says they are interested in running a library, does that make that library less likely to be a Council-run hub? If an organisation says they are interested in having a library service in their building, does that mean it is more likely that their nearby Council-run library will close?

Secondly, they reveal the flexibility of the term 'community-run' or 'volunteer-run' library. If a group says they are willing to have a few books in their building, is that a library? How sustainable will that library be? Won't it be wholly reliant on the goodwill of that organisation and its volunteers?

We also have concerns about the implications of a community asset transfer:

- What checks will the Council do to make sure that any community organisation has the infrastructure and resources that will enable it to run a library service? And what support and safeguards will the Council put in place to check that the community organisation is doing what it needs to do so that Birmingham residents continue to receive the service they deserve?
- Will the community organisation have to take on the full responsibility of running and maintaining the building? Given that libraries aren't income-generating services, where will it get the funding to pay for the running and maintenance costs? This is especially problematic given that if multiple libraries across Birmingham are being transferred to community organisations, they will be competing for the same funding sources.
- Will the employment of any library staff be transferred to the community organisation? Again, how will that organisation get the funding to pay the staff? How will the organisation know what training they need to keep up-to-date?
- How will the library membership and stock be managed and kept up-to-date? Will the service be able to access the Council-run library IT system? Will the service be able to get books from the other libraries?

Questions in the survey:

Which of the following statements apply to you/your organisation or group? (Please select all that apply)

- 31. *I/we currently share a building with a library.*
- 32. *I/we are interested in having a library service occupy space in our premises*
- 33. *I/we are interested in moving our business/service/group into an existing library building*
- 34. *I/we have a building that could be available to host a community-led library*
- 35. *I/we are interested in offering aspects of a library service i.e. books for loan or public Wi-Fi as a colocation site*
- 36. *I/we are interested in volunteering opportunities to run, open and close buildings to maintain provision*
- 37. *Other*

And just a few more:

- 38. *To what extent might you want to be involved in supporting the delivery of library services in your area? (Please select ONE only)*
- 39. *If you would like to formally register your interest, what is your individual/group/organisation name?*
- 40. *If you would like to formally register your interest, please provide your email address:*
- 41. *What else would encourage you to get involved in supporting a local community library in your area?*
- 42. *What type of involvement would you like to have?*
- 43. *What information, advice or support would you/your organisation or group need from Birmingham City Council to run a community library in partnership with Birmingham City Council?*

Section 4 (Q44-49): The Vision for Birmingham's Libraries

You are almost there, you've nearly reached the finish line of the survey marathon. One more section to go about the Council's "strong vision". They outline their vision in the document "Birmingham Strategic Framework for Library Services (draft) - 2024 - 2029"¹

Here is a choice snippet:

"We build upon the modernising journey that the City started in 2017 for our Library Services, with a strong focus on citizen outcomes. However, to ensure the Council has a sustainable future we will need to consider efficiency and cost reduction options, whilst delivering a thriving, modern Library Service."

We didn't know that "modernising journey" was code for "continued cuts and austerity". We do not understand how "cost reduction options" can deliver thriving public services. It's this constant doublespeak that makes reading these documents so frustrating.

So what is their vision for Birmingham's Libraries? Here it is, in their own words, all warm and fuzzy:

The Vision for Birmingham's Libraries

We have a strong vision for Birmingham's library services which protects the core library offer in local communities. We want to provide cultural and creative enrichment, increase reading and literacy and improve digital access and literacy to all our communities but specifically ensure that provision is protected for our most vulnerable.

Helping everyone achieve their full potential and to lead healthy, happy lives is a key focus which will underpin greater prosperity and stronger, more resilient communities.

We want to deliver a library service that will:

- *Deliver an offer which meets the needs of communities at all stages of their lives.*
- *Move from an output to outcomes focus.*
- *Use the principles of early intervention and prevention principles to service design to create safe universal spaces that are open to all.*
- *Provide targeted homes and money advice.*
- *Working with partners, host tailored services designed to increase the health and wellbeing of the community they serve.*
- *Use data and insight to centre on citizen need.*
- *Recognise the progress to date and how that can be accelerated.*
- *Apply a change to achieving a financially sustainable solution.*
- *Empower communities, partners, and volunteers.*

¹https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/29019/birmingham_strategic_framework_for_library_services_draft_-_2024_-_2029

Here is the question that follows, with our guidance:

44. Do you agree that this is the right vision for Birmingham Libraries?

Here you get two boxes to write in, one that asks “Tell us a bit more about why you think this” and another, “Are there any gaps?”

We recommend mentioning:

- This vision may sound good, but it is based on minimal understanding of what libraries mean to communities cross Birmingham.
- It is all very well saying we are moving to an “outcomes focus”: let us think about the impact of closing libraries! People will not have access to all the services provided by our libraries.
- How can you be focusing on citizen need when you are cutting our services?
- The gaps seem to be more information on actual libraries, like how many you are proposing to have, how many people each library is supposed to serve, as well as details on who will staff those libraries.
- Another gap is focusing on WHO will deliver these services if you are planning to make such deep cuts to staff and rely on volunteers.

On the next page you will see the Council's priorities for Birmingham's Libraries and comment on them. Here, in their own words, are their priorities:

The priorities for Birmingham's Libraries

- ***A Prosperous Birmingham:*** *sparking ambition through education, supporting pre-employment, digital inclusion, mentoring, ESOL and learning.*
- ***An Inclusive Birmingham:*** *the promotion of early learning, digital inclusion, increased library membership (particularly in hard-to-reach areas), and by engendering social contact and combatting isolation. Creating platforms where Birmingham's many cultures come together to learn positive new ways of doing things.*
- ***A Safe Birmingham:*** *Encouraging digital safety, particularly among the young, encouraging critical thinking, and fighting fake news and the sources of fake news. Creating safe places for city conversations and respectful debate.*
- ***A Healthy Birmingham:*** *The promotion of health and wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, consumption, exercise, sleep management and looking after each other. Nurturing a multifaceted approach to human development.*
- ***A Green Birmingham:*** *through digital books and lending, energy efficient buildings, community warm spaces and through learning and data about how to protect our neighbourhoods, our city and our world.*

Here is the question that follows, with our guidance:

45. To what extent do you agree that the Libraries priorities, which are based on the Council priorities, are right for Library Services?

Here you get two boxes to write in (“Tell us a bit more about why you think this” and “Are there any gaps?”). We recommend mentioning:

- These priorities sound fine, but bear little resemblance to the options proposed for the future of the library service, which involve deep cuts to library services, staff, and buildings as well as a reliance on already-stretched community groups and volunteers.

Then, on the next page you will see the Council’s “seven outcomes” for Birmingham’s Libraries and comment on them:

Seven outcomes for Libraries

1. *Culture and Creative enrichment*
2. *Increased Reading and Literacy*
3. *Digital Access and Literacy*
4. *Helping citizens to achieve their full potential*
5. *Healthier and Happier Lives*
6. *Greater Prosperity*
7. *Stronger, more resilient communities*

46. What else could we do as a Council that would benefit those who live, work and study in Birmingham and deliver against the 7 outcomes for Libraries?

Here you get a text box to answer with up to 2000 characters, which is about 300-500 words. We recommend suggesting:

- Funding library services properly
- Respect library users enough to carry out proper research into how to maintain a comprehensive and efficient library service.
- Not close our community libraries
- Not rely on volunteers and community groups to run a public service in what is a dereliction of duty on the part of the council

47. How much do you agree with the Strategic Framework proposed and Actions Moving Forward?

This is an important question offering you the option to disagree with their proposed plan. Here you get two boxes to write in (“Tell us a bit more about why you think this” and “Are there any gaps?”). We think “Actions Moving Forward” refers to the chart in the Strategic Framework document on pp 13-14.²

²https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/29019/birmingham_strategic_framework_for_library_services_draft_-_2024_-_2029

We recommend mentioning:

- If you think that the Strategic Framework and Actions Moving Forward, are confusing, say so (we're confused)! If you disagree with the proposed options, say why -- i.e. because you love your local library and want to be able to continue to use it (and not have to run it)
- If you are concerned by their plan to fragment the library service and hand over libraries to volunteers rather than trained staff, say so!
- If you think that these cuts will be costly in the long run and should not go ahead, say so.
- If you think they should do more research into other alternative options, say so. Don't feel you have to propose alternatives, it is their job to do the research, not yours!

48. Within the Strategic Framework for the Library Service we share the Community Hub Approach to delivering a Library Service, how much do you agree with this approach?

This is an important question offering you the option to disagree with their proposed plan. Here you get two boxes to write in ("Tell us a bit more about why you think this" and "Are there any gaps?"). We recommend mentioning:

- **Fewer libraries:** By vastly reducing the number of council-run libraries, it neglects our long-established legal right to a 'comprehensive and efficient library service' (Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964).
- **Further to travel:** It would increase the distance people have to travel to libraries in a city with limited public transport options. This would have the biggest impact on the elderly, people with disabilities, parents/carers of young children, young people, and people on low incomes. Even if a 'community hub' is open in the evening, if it requires a bus ride or two, or a 40 minute walk, will people go?
- **What is a Community Library hub?** There is scant detail about what community library hubs will look like. While co-location (having lots of different services in one building) could work, it requires enough space, staff, and "needs to be carefully designed to ensure that the library service is not overwhelmed by other services, and that the services are complementary" ([Arts Council 2017](#)). We want to know: which buildings could accommodate all of this? How will confidentiality requirements of some services be met? How much space will be given to library services? How will these hubs be staffed?

49. Is there anything else we should include in the Strategic Framework for Library Service?

Here you have 5000 characters, which is about 700-1200 words, so if you want to write a little essay about why you love your library and you don't want it to close, lose staff or become volunteer-run, this is the place! (No pressure, we are exhausted by this point too).

Section 5: Q50-66 onwards about the respondent

This section asks for identifying information, postal code, whether you are in legally defined protected categories, etc. It is optional.

“You do not have to answer these questions, and we understand that some of this information is personal and sensitive in nature. However, gathering this data helps us to know if we are succeeding in involving different groups of people, delivering services and to change our approach where gaps are found. The data will not be used to identify you, just to help inform our approach.”

And then, you’ve made it! You’ll see this notice:

By clicking 'Submit Response' you give us permission to analyse and include your response in our results. After you click Submit, you will no longer be able to go back and change any of your answers.

You can input your email address to receive a receipt and a link to a PDF copy of your response. We recommend doing this.

Don’t forget to click Submit Response.

Please let us know if you found this guide helpful or if you spot any errors. Email us (birminghamloveslibraries@gmail.com) with any tips you think we should include, or if you notice any problems with the survey.

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