

# West Berkshire Council

## Equity Impact Assessment

March 2023

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## Section 1: Summary details

<b>Directorate and Service Area</b>	Place Directorate and Culture and Libraries
<b>What is being assessed</b> (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	To discontinue the mobile library service from 1 April 2025.
<b>Is this a new or existing function or policy?</b>	Existing Service
<b>Summary of assessment</b> Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community?  (following completion of the assessment).	To retire the mobile library vehicle, which is end of life, and replace it with a range of more effective service options for residents, particularly those living in rural areas. This proposal is supported by the community needs assessment which was undertaken by an independent 3rd party in 2022.
<b>Completed By</b>	Felicity Harrison/Elizabeth Beverley
<b>Authorised By</b>	
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	21/10/2024

## Section 2: Detail of proposal

### Context / Background

Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.

The council is proposing to retire the mobile library vehicle, which is end of life, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, and replace it with a range of more effective library service options for residents across the district.

The mobile library service has been operating in the West Berkshire area for over 40 years. It currently travels to 76 locations throughout the West Berkshire, including public service stops throughout the district, schools, nurseries, sheltered housing, a community café, and a hospital. The service provides access to 1,500 items of fiction, non-fiction, large print, spoken word CDs and a selection of children’s books. Book reservations are provided as well as general information. The frequency of mobile library visits was reduced from 3 weekly to 6 weekly in July 2024. Details of stops, dates and times can be found on the library website. [www.westberks.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/libraries)

Use of the mobile library service has been in decline over the last few years. Up until 2017/18 there were two mobile library vehicles in West Berkshire, but one of the outcomes of the Libraries Review at that time was to retire the larger mobile library vehicle out of the fleet of two. The smaller vehicle was retained, but the service has been subject to further decline. Statistics for 2023/24 show that many residents who use the mobile library service, also borrow books from the physical library buildings and therefore would not be severely impacted by no longer having access to this service. Only 239 residents solely used the mobile library service in 2023/24.

The total budget for the mobile and At Home service is £86,880 for 2024/25 and covers two full time posts as well as vehicle costs. This proposal to discontinue the mobile library service will generate a saving of £42,080 annually against this cost centre.

Saving on staffing: Mobile Driver Post – currently vacant	£33,020
Saving on vehicle costs	£9,060
<b>Total saving</b>	<b>£42,080</b>

If this proposal is agreed, then this annual saving of £42,080 made will be retained within the library service budget.

	<p>The Mobile Driver post will be deleted but the remaining Mobile Service Officer post will be retained to manage community outreach work through the library At Home service and pop-up libraries which will be part of the new libraries offer to residents.</p>
<p><b>Proposals</b></p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>The council is proposing to discontinue the mobile library service from 1st April 2025 and replace it with a range of more effective library service options for residents particularly in rural areas.</p> <p>This proposal to discontinue the mobile library service will generate a saving of £42,080 annually, out of a total budget allocation of £86,880 for the Mobile Library and At Home Service. If agreed, then this annual saving will be retained within the library service budget, and used to develop the new libraries offer.</p> <p>The following proposals are being put forward to ensure that residents are not disadvantaged by the discontinuation of the mobile library service which currently operates by visiting a set route of 76 locations over a 6-week cycle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Expansion of the library ‘At Home’ service</b> Residents unable to visit static library buildings and therefore meeting the criteria for the library 'At Home' service, will be matched up with a DBS checked volunteer. The volunteer would then spend time getting to know the reading tastes of the person they had been linked up with to enable them to choose and deliver a selection of books to them in their own home on a regular basis every 3 weeks. <p>The delivery of this service will not be restricted to a timetable of set locations only and can be delivered anywhere in the West Berkshire district therefore increasing accessibility.</p> <p>Customers with mobility issues can receive book deliveries the service in their own homes rather than having to attempt to access the mobile library vehicle.</p> </li> <li>• <b>Community outreach</b></li> </ul>

	<p>Visits to settings such as pre-schools, community cafes etc. to deliver library services will increase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pop-up libraries</b> A selection of additional costed library service options for pop-up libraries will be put forward to town and parish councils for their consideration.</li> <li>• <b>e-library provision</b> Residents will continue to have the option of borrowing a vast selection of books/magazines/newspapers through the e-library service, free of charge. Help in accessing these digital services can be provided by library staff and volunteers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evidence / Intelligence</b></p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>Use of the mobile library service has been in decline over the last few years. Up until 2017/18 there were two mobile library vehicles in West Berkshire, but one of the outcomes of the Libraries Review at that time was to retire the larger mobile library vehicle out of the fleet of two. The smaller vehicle was retained, but the service has been subject to further decline. Statistics for 2023/24 show that many residents who use the mobile library service, also borrow books from the physical library buildings and therefore would not be severely impacted by no longer having access to this service. Only 239 residents solely used the mobile library service in 2023/24.</p>

<p><b>Alternatives considered / rejected</b></p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>The current mobile library vehicle, owned by WBC, is 18 years old. Maintenance costs are increasing year on year to keep this ageing diesel vehicle on the road.</p> <p>If this service were to continue in its current form, then a new vehicle would be required. As part of reviewing this service, the council has investigated the cost of replacing the vehicle with a like for like electric version - this would cost in the region of £200k. In view of the significant investment required, combined with the diminishing usage of the service, this option has been discounted.</p>
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### Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
<b>Age</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>A child or elderly person may find it more difficult to access a physical library service if their closest open library is further away.</p> <p>The overall strategy seeks to ensure the At Home Library Service, increased outreach provision, and the digital e-library offer with robust digital support to combat digital exclusion has a positive impact on children and elderly people, ensuring that they will not be disadvantaged by this change in service.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Elderly residents will be able to receive books delivered to their own homes through the library At Home service.</li> <li>2. Extra digital support will be made available to elderly residents to enable them to access e-library resources if they wish to.</li> <li>3. Library provision increased through collaboration with town and parish councils to provide pop-up libraries.</li> <li>4. Library provision increased through community outreach.</li> </ol>	<p>Elizabeth Beverley</p> <p>Libraries Manger</p>	
<b>Disability</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The expanded At Home service, will be more supportive for those residents who cannot access static library buildings because of their disability.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expansion of the library At Home service, and the ability to reach residents with disabilities all over the district rather than being limited to a set route/timetable.</li> </ol>	<p>Elizabeth Beverley</p> <p>Libraries Manger</p>	

				It will not be restricted to a timetable of set locations and can be delivered anywhere in the West Berkshire district therefore increasing accessibility for residents. The At Home service will also improve access for those residents who may have struggled to access the mobile library vehicle, ensuring that they will not be disadvantaged by this change in service.	2. Extra digital support will be made available to residents with disabilities, to enable them to access e-library resources if they wish to.		
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A pregnant woman or new mother may find it more difficult to access library services if their closest open library is further away. The overall strategy seeks to ensure the At Home library service, increased outreach provision, and the digital e-library offer with robust digital support to combat digital exclusion ensures that this	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pregnant women will be eligible to receive books delivered to their own homes through the library At Home service.</li> <li>2. Extra digital support will also be made available to this group, to enable them to access e-library resources if they wish to.</li> <li>3. Increased community outreach work.</li> </ol>	Elizabeth Beverley Libraries Manger	



				group of residents will not be disadvantaged.	4. Library provision increased through collaboration with town and parish councils to provide pop-up libraries.		
<b>Race</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Sex</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

### Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The mobile library service which visited rural settings throughout the district will cease on 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025. It will be replaced by alternative options for library provision to ensure that residents are not disadvantaged by this change.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expansion of the library At Home service, and the ability to reach residents all over the district rather than being limited to a set route/timetable.</li> <li>2. Increasing library service community outreach visits to settings such as pre-schools and community cafes.</li> <li>3. Working with town and parish councils to promote a costed pop-up library option in those areas of the district without library provision in their locality.</li> <li>4. Promoting the e-library offer by providing support for residents to access these services and</li> </ol>	Elizabeth Beverley  Libraries Manger	

<b>Additional community impacts</b>	<b>No Impact</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Description of impact</b>	<b>Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts</b>	<b>Action owner</b> (* Job Title, Organisation)	<b>Timescale and monitoring arrangements</b>
					combat digital exclusion.		
<b>Areas of deprivation</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Displaced communities</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Care experienced people</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>The Armed Forces Community</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

## Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

<b>Review Date</b>	
<b>Person Responsible for Review</b>	
<b>Authorised By</b>	