Wirral Council Libraries Consultation 2022

Main report

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Wirral Council

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Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

Wirral Council operates 23 libraries across the borough, which are supported by an online library, home reader service and Schools' Library Service. Last year Wirral Council consulted with local people about ways that it can deliver a library service that is fit for the future and that provides everyone with access to the service. Using information from the consultation activities and other sources the council developed options for the future of the service, with the aim of providing the best possible service using available resources.

Wirral Council commissioned Enventure Research to undertake a programme of consultation with library service stakeholders between February and April 2022 to seek feedback on the options for the future. The findings from the consultation programme will feed into the Wirral Council Library Strategy.

Methodology summary

A mixed-methodology approach, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, was used for this engagement programme, including:

- An interviewer led telephone survey (with some additional face to face on-street interviews) with 900 residents of the Wirral Borough aged 16 and above, with quotas set to achieve a sample that was representative of the area in terms of age group, gender, and constituency area of the borough

- A self-completion online survey (with an alternative paper survey and Easy Read completion options) targeted at residents of the borough, promoted by Wirral Council via the 'Have Your Say' consultation portal, which achieved 1,123 responses

- Eight focus groups with stakeholder groups from across the borough

Enventure Research was commissioned to conduct the consultation programme, analyse and evaluate the feedback and provide a comprehensive report on the findings. The survey questionnaire and the focus group guide were co-designed by Enventure Research and Wirral Council.

A more detailed description of the methodology for this research can be found in section 1.2 of the report.

Consultation numbers

Across both survey types, **2,023 completed responses** were received. Across the focus groups, 43 people from across the borough took part, including secondary school pupils. For more information, please see sections 1.3 and 1.4 of the report.

Key consultation findings

The following pages present the key findings from this consultation programme. For more detail about the findings, please see the relevant chapters within this report.

Response to the consultation
- A total of 2,023 responses were received to the consultation, 1,123 responses to the self-completion survey and 900 responses to the interviewer led survey.
- Birkenhead and Wallasey were the most well represented constituency areas in the interviewer led survey (29% and 27%), whereas Wirral South and Wirral West were in the self-completion survey (23% and 22%).

- In the self-completion survey, organisations, businesses or groups were represented (n=19), as were schools (n=4), library staff members (n=13), library volunteers (n=19) and a Member of Parliament (n=1).

Usage, importance and perceptions of the library service

- In total, 81% of respondents visited or used a library – this was higher in the self-completion survey (96%) than in the interviewer led survey (62%).
- Library usage was higher amongst females (85% compared with 71% of males), parents, carers or guardians (87% compared with 78% of non-parents), and those in areas of low deprivation (92% compared with 67% in areas of higher deprivation).
- Library usage was lower amongst those aged 16-24 than amongst older age groups (55% compared with 80% to 88%).
- The libraries most used or visited by respondents were:
    - Wallasey Central Library (10%)
    - Birkenhead Central Library (8%)
    - West Kirby Library (8%).
- All focus group participants said they were library service users, with some using it more than others.
- Usage amongst focus group participants mainly centred around borrowing books, but a few used the service for other reasons, such as accessing digital services or for education or research purposes.
- Focus group participants discussed the importance of libraries to communities and individuals, particularly school children, families, those living in deprived areas and older residents, highlighting that they have a positive impact for individuals' wellbeing.
- Focus group participants held the following perceptions:
    - Current opening times are too restrictive and should ensure that everyone can access the service, including those who work five days a week
    - Libraries do not cater well for younger people, such as teenagers
    - The services on offer are not well promoted leading to low awareness amongst the general public, and some did not realise that libraries had reopened after closures due to the pandemic
    - The website and online service could be improved
    - Public demand for library services had fallen in the past few decades

Option preference

- *Option 3 (recommended option)* was the most popular option (37%), followed by *Option 3 as amended* (32%).
- *Option 1* and *Option 2* were less popular (4% and 15%) and one in ten (10%) preferred none of the options.
- *Option 3 as amended* was most popular in the self-completion survey (40%), whereas *Option 3 (recommended option)* was most popular in the interviewer led survey (42%).
- Amongst users who would be affected by *Option 3 (recommended option)* because their library would close or become a self-serve site, *Option 3 as amended* was most popular (35%).
- *Option 3 (recommended option)* and *Option 3 as amended* were most popular in the focus groups – the vast majority of participants said they did not think that *Option 1* or *Option 2* would provide a comprehensive service and coverage across the borough, but many acknowledged that savings needed to be made in the service and so therefore these two options were preferred.
- There was some cynicism in the focus groups that *Option 1* and *Option 2* had been designed to illustrate how much the service could be cut back, so as to push people towards a preference for Option 3.

Impact of options on service provision

- In total, 85% thought that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision across the borough and 70% thought the same about *Option 2*.
- Larger proportions of respondents thought that *Option 3 (recommended option)* and *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall positive impact* (50% and 47% respectively) than *overall negative* (31% and 27% respectively).

- Respondents living in Wirral West were more likely to think that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision (43%) than those in other areas (20% to 29%).
- Over half of those who used a library that would be affected by *Option 3 (recommended option)* thought it would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision (52%).
- Hoylake and Meols and Greasby, Frankby and Irby were the most commonly identified areas in which *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* (33% and 32% respectively).
- When asked to explain why *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision across the borough, the most common themes were that the option was negative for areas losing a library (25%) and that libraries are important to communities or as social hubs (24%).
- Those living in Wirral South and Wirral West were more likely to think *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision (27% and 33%) than those in Birkenhead and Wallasey (16% and 20% respectively).
- Focus group participants were generally against the idea of any libraries closing, but some said they would support the options if there was significant additional investment in the library service and for libraries that remained open.
- It was highlighted by some focus group participants that in some areas of the borough residents would be left without easy access to the library service.

Impacts of options for households

Options 1 and 2
- In total, 66% thought that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household and 53% thought the same about *Option 2*.

Option 3 (recommended)
- Larger proportions said that *Option 3 (recommended option)* and *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall positive impact* (36% and 33% respectively) than an *overall negative impact* for them and their household (24% and 20% respectively).
- Overall, 37% said that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have *no impact* for them and their household, which was the most common response.
- Subgroup analysis shows that the following groups were more likely than other groups to say that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household (24% overall):
  o Females (26% compared with 18% of males)
  o Those aged 45-64 and 65+ (26% and 28% compared with 22% of 25-44 year olds and 6% of 16-24 year olds)
  o Those living in Wirral West (35%) compared with those in other areas (15% to 18%)
  o Those in areas of lower deprivation (29%) compared with those living in areas of higher deprivation (14%).
- Over half of those who used a library that would be affected by *Option 3 (recommended option)* said it would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household (52%).
- Amongst those who said that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* or an *overall positive impact* for them and their household, the most common explanation was that libraries are important to communities or as social hubs (20%), closely followed by that *Option 3 (recommended option)* was the best option, gave the most coverage or kept more libraries open than other options (19%), and that libraries are important to children or for education (18%).

Option 3 (as amended)
- Overall, 40% said that *Option 3 as amended* would have *no impact* for them and their household, which was the most common response.
- Subgroup analysis shows that the following groups were more likely than other groups to say that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household (20% overall):
  o Females (22% compared with 16% of males)

- o Those aged 45-64 and 65+ (23% and 22% compared with 5% of 16-24 year olds)
- o Those living in Wirral West (27%) compared with those in other areas (11% to 18%).
- o Those in areas of lower deprivation (22%) compared with those living in areas of higher deprivation (12%).

Focus groups
- Focus group participants felt that people from deprived areas would be most impacted if their local library closed, as they would not have the means to access books and other reading materials, and also highlighted that those who relied on public transport or walking as a means of transport would be more affected.

Using an alternative library service, self-serve sites and community asset transfers
- When asked which alternative service they would use if the library they use most often was not open, the most common response amongst library users was that they would no longer use the service (21%).
- This was followed by West Kirby Library (14%) and Birkenhead Central Library (11%).
- The likelihood of users saying they would no longer use the service if their library was not open increased by age, with those in the youngest age group less likely to say that they would not use another service (13%) than those in the oldest age group (24%).
- Amongst users of libraries that would be affected by Option 3 (recommended option), the most common response was that they would stop using the service (22%), very closely followed by West Kirby Library (21%).
- Although some in the focus group were open to the idea of using self-serve sites, there following concerns were expressed:
  - o Books and equipment might be stolen, or libraries could become a target for antisocial behaviour if there are no staff on site
  - o Some people might be unable to use the self-serve scanning machines
  - o Safety concerns for vulnerable people if there are no staff on site
  - o Library staff are trained and knowledgeable and their assistance would be unavailable to those using a self-serve site
- However, some focus group participants were open to the idea of self-serve sites if it meant a library continued to be open, and some had experience of using self-serve machines already.
- The following concerns were also expressed by focus group participants in relation to community asset transfers of some libraries:
  - o There might be a lack of interested groups or organisations, particularly given the tight timescale the council is working to
  - o It would be challenging for groups or organisations to run libraries in a financially viable way, without any funding from the council
  - o Volunteers can be unreliable which might mean there were some days that libraries could not open if volunteer staff did not turn up
  - o Groups or organisations running libraries might introduce charges for usage, which would result in a loss of a free service
  - o Community asset transfers might fail, which would lead to library closures anyway
  - o Participants felt more information was needed about how they might work before they could support the idea
- However, some focus group participants supported the idea if it would ensure that more libraries remained open.

Preferred days and times to use libraries
- When asked which day of the week and time of day they would most prefer to use a library, all mornings and afternoons were selected by four in ten or more of those who were library service users.
- Saturday afternoon between 2pm and 5pm was the most popular day and time (47%), followed very closely by Saturday morning 9am to 1pm (46%) and Friday afternoon between 2pm and 5pm (45%).
- Evenings were the least popular time to use a library, with Saturday evening after 5pm the most popular evening (25%) and Tuesday evening the least popular (21%).

- Amongst library users aged 16-24, Saturday afternoon was most popular (71%) and this was much higher than for other age groups (36% to 55%).
- Wirral libraries that would remain open under Option 3 (recommended option) are categorised as community libraries and central libraries.
- Amongst central library users, Saturday afternoon was the most popular (52%), followed by Friday afternoon (48%).
- In contrast, the most popular time amongst users of community libraries was Friday morning (44%), followed by Saturday morning and Friday afternoon (both 43%).
- Focus group participants highlighted that opening hours should meet the needs of everyone in the community, including those who work full-time and families.

Mobile library

- Four in ten said they might use a mobile library if it were offered (44%) – 14% *definitely* and 30% *maybe*.
- Those in the youngest age group (16-24) were most likely to say they might use a mobile library (56%), with likelihood of using falling by age.
- Larger proportions in Wirral West and Wirral South said they might use a mobile library (49% and 48% respectively) than those living in Birkenhead and Wallasey (43% and 41% respectively).
- When asked why they would not use a mobile library, the most common reason was a preference to go to a library in a building (56%), with a further 32% believing that it would not provide the service they needed.
- When asked what other services they would like to see on a mobile library (in addition to the core library service), digital services was most common (51%), followed very closely by activities and events related to library services (50%).
- A further 46% said they would like to see Story Time, and 45% each selected council information and other services and Click and Collect.
- For those aged 16-24, digital services was the most common service requested for a mobile library (50%).
- Focus group participants felt they needed more information about how a mobile library might work, what it might look like and what services it would provide, although some were open to the idea and suggested that it was better than there being no library service in some areas at all.
- A few focus group participants were aware of mobile libraries working successfully in other parts of the country, particularly in rural locations.
- In the focus groups the following concerns were expressed in regard to a mobile library:
  - One mobile library would not be sufficient to provide a comprehensive service across the whole of the borough and would not be able to spend much time in each location
  - It would not be easily accessible for wheelchair users
  - It could become busy and overcrowded, which some participants were wary about in light of the pandemic
  - Residents might not be able to rely on times of stops if it was subject to getting stuck in traffic or breaking down
  - It might not have a wide enough selection of books to cater to everyone's needs
  - There might not be enough space to provide digital services and space for socialising, groups meeting, and reading
  - It could be costly to the council, which might negate savings made elsewhere through library closures

Further comments on the proposed options

- When asked if they had any other comments about the proposed options for the future of the Library Service, the most common theme was that any reduction in the service is negative or that libraries should not be closed (30%).
- A further quarter highlighted that libraries are important to communities or as social hubs (25%).
- One in five mentioned that libraries are important to children or for education (20%).
- One in ten suggested that libraries should be promoted more (10%).
- Focus group participants also felt that the library service and its wider offering was not well promoted, and suggested the council could look at how it could increase service usage amongst residents.

- Other ideas to generate income for the library service or to save money were floated in the focus groups:
  - Introduce cafes or sell refreshments
  - Charge for some services, such as for accessing research materials
  - Accept book donations instead of investing in new books
- Some in the focus groups felt that the service needed investment in general, particularly in relation to the upkeep and presentation of buildings and facilities, promotion of the service and functionality of the online service.
- It was also suggested in the focus groups that the library service offering could be tailored to appeal more to younger people, particularly teenagers, through providing facilities to socialise with friends, play games or watch films, and generally ensuring that libraries provide welcoming safe spaces for them.
- Participants in the Friends of Libraries group felt that there had been a few communication issues recently with the council library service and suggested that closer partnership working with Friends groups would be beneficial to the service, as they could help raise funds and support the service.
- There were a few concerns amongst focus group participants about the consultation process itself:
  - There may be some people who are unaware of the consultation and the proposed changes to the library service
  - There may be some reluctance to participate in the current consultation as people think their voice will not be heard, given their experience with previous consultations
  - There is a perception that the council has already decided to implement *Option 3 (recommended option)* and is just consulting as a 'tick box exercise'
  - Decisions will be taken by council officers who do not use the library service and do not understand what the service means to people
  - There is a perception that there is no long-term plan for the service, which will result in further closures in subsequent years

Summary of recommendations

1. The Council should implement *Option 3 (recommended option)*

2. Ensure that whichever option is implemented, a comprehensive, efficient and accessible library service is provided across the whole of the borough

3. *Option 1* and *Option 2* should not be further considered as they will not provide a comprehensive and accessible library service across the borough

4. The Council should be considerate towards any of the affected groups for whichever option is implemented

5. As well as providing access to books and the spoken word, the Council should ensure that self-serve sites provide other facilities, such as digital services, and rooms for groups and organisations to use, and that they continue to be a safe space, retaining library staff at least for a limited time

6. A mobile library should be considered in areas where there will be no library building to ensure those areas have access to library services

7. A mobile library should include digital services, activities and events related to library services, Story Time, council information and other services, and a Click and Collect service

8. A mobile library should be accessible for people who have disabilities

9. Consideration should be made to open remaining libraries Monday to Saturday, and mornings and afternoons where feasible

10. Promote the library service more to encourage usage across the borough, which could positively improve literacy levels, social mobility and alleviate loneliness

11. Review the service provision for younger people to ensure it appeals and to encourage usage

12. Work more closely with Friends of Libraries groups.

1. Consultation Programme

1.1 Background

Wirral Council is responsible for the service and delivery of 23 public libraries across the borough, which make a unique and valued contribution to the cultural, social and intellectual fabric of society. They are community spaces that are free for everyone to enter and access literature, information, knowledge, and opportunities. As well as borrowing books, people can access the internet and Wi-Fi for free in public libraries, find job opportunities, find out about their family history or that of the local area, and take part in a variety of events, courses and activities. Public libraries provide information about health and health services, and reading well programmes, as well as being neutral spaces for third sector organisations to provide information and advice. Many people also access other library services such as the online library, home reader service and Schools' Library Service.

Wirral Council is developing a new Library Strategy with an aim to modernise the library service to ensure that it meets today's needs, targeting resources to where the local need is greatest. Last year Wirral Council consulted with local people about ways that it can deliver a library service that is fit for the future and that provides everyone with access to the service. Using information from the consultation activities and other sources, the council developed options for the future of the service with the aim of providing the best possible service using available resources.

Listening to the views of library service stakeholders through a programme of consultation is crucial to help Wirral Council identify the best option for the future of the library service, which meets local needs and makes best possible use of available resources.

Wirral Council commissioned Enventure Research to undertake a programme of consultation with library service stakeholders between February and April 2022 to seek feedback on the options for the future. The findings from the consultation programme will feed into the Wirral Council Library Strategy.

1.2 Methodology overview

A mixed-methodology approach, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, was used for this engagement programme, including:

- An interviewer led telephone survey (with some additional face to face on-street interviews) with 900 residents of the Wirral Borough aged 16 and above, with quotas set to achieve a sample that was representative of the area in terms of age group, gender, and constituency area of the borough

- A self-completion online survey (with paper survey and Easy Read completion options) targeted at residents of the borough, promoted by Wirral Council via the 'Have Your Say' consultation portal, which achieved 1,123 responses

- Eight focus groups with stakeholder groups from across the borough

1.3 Interviewer led survey methodology and response

A telephone survey was conducted with residents of the Wirral Borough aged 16 and above by a team of telephone interviewers using a CATI methodology (Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing). Additional face-to-face interviews were carried out in the borough by trained interviewers to balance quotas.

The survey followed a questionnaire that was developed by Enventure Research and Wirral Council. Interviews took no longer than 12 minutes for an interviewer to complete with a respondent. The questionnaire can be found in *Appendix 1*.

Interviewer shifts took place at different times, on both weekdays and weekends (including at peak times), to ensure that all segments of the community had an equal opportunity to participate. Additional face to face interviews were undertaken with residents at various locations across the borough to balance quotas.

Before launching the survey, the questionnaire was tested with a small number of residents, who were asked to take part and provide feedback on their experience. This helped ensure that the questionnaire was easy to understand, would elicit useful responses, was a suitable length and that the questions were asked in a non-biased manner to collect valid and reliable data.

In total, **900 interviews** were achieved, with fieldwork taking place between 21 February and 14 March 2022.

Wards across the borough were divided into four constituency areas and quotas were set on these areas based on population figures:

- 'Birkenhead' comprised the wards of Birkenhead and Tranmere, Prenton, Bidston and St James, Claughton, Rock Ferry, and Oxton
- 'Wallasey' comprised the wards of Liscard, Seacombe, Moreton West and Saughall Massie, Wallasey, Leasowe and Moreton East, and New Brighton
- 'Wirral South' comprised the wards of Heswall, Bromborough, Clatterbridge, Eastham, and Bebington
- 'Wirral West' comprised the wards of Hoylake and Meols, Greasby, Frankby and Irby, West Kirby and Thurstaston, Upton, and Pensby and Thingwall

Quotas for the survey were set on age group and sex based on mid-year population estimates for the borough to provide a sample that was broadly representative in terms of those demographic characteristics.

1.4 Self-completion survey methodology and response

The same questionnaire was used in the self-completion survey. The self-completion survey was open to everyone aged 16+ that lived in the borough.

The survey was securely hosted online and managed by Enventure Research. The survey could be completed via Wirral Council's 'Have Your Say' consultation portal at www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk. To inform people about the consultation, key documents were published on the webpage and were available for download. These included an overview of the consultation and a set of Frequently Asked Questions, the Draft Library Strategy, and an Easy Read version of the survey.

The questionnaire was published on the website to allow residents to answer the questions online. To ensure accessibility, respondents were able to request paper copies of the survey and an Easy Read version. Paper copies, along with pre-paid envelopes (including Easy Read questionnaires), were made available in libraries and other venues, and any groups could request a set of copies as required. Completed paper questionnaires were returned to and processed by Enventure Research.

The self-completion survey was live between 21 February and 18 April 2022. During this time, **1,123 responses** were received.

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of self-completion survey responses by survey format. As shown, the majority of responses were received online (87%) and 13% were completed via a paper survey.

Figure 1 – Responses by stakeholder type (Q1)
Base: Self-completion survey responses (1,123)

Survey format	Number of responses	% of sample
Online	972	87%
Paper	151	13%

1.5   Survey respondent profile

Interviewer led survey
The figures below and overleaf show the respondent profile for residents who took part in the interviewer led survey.

Figure 2 shows the population breakdown, the target quotas set, the number of completed interviews achieved and the percentage breakdown by constituency area for the interviewer led survey.

Figure 2 – Quotas, numbers and percentages of achieved interviews for the interviewer led survey by constituency area (based on Q2)
Base: Interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Constituency area	% of population[1]	Quota	Number of responses	% of sample
Birkenhead	28%	252	258	29%
Wallasey	28%	252	244	27%
Wirral South	23%	207	194	22%
Wirral West	21%	189	204	23%

Figure 3 shows the population breakdown, the target quotas set, and the breakdown of the achieved sample by age group and gender for the interviewer led survey.

Figure 3 – Quotas, numbers and percentages of achieved interviews for the interviewer led survey by age group and gender (Q3 and Q4)
Base: Interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Characteristic	% of population[2]	Quota	Number of responses	% of sample
Gender				
Male	48%	430	409	45%
Female	52%	470	483	54%
Other	0%	0	1	0%
Prefer not to say	-	-	7	1%
Age group				
16-24	11%	101	123	14%
25-44	28%	255	237	26%
45-64	34%	302	259	29%
65+	27%	243	258	29%
Prefer not to say	-	0	23	3%

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[1] 2011 census
[2] 2019 ONS population estimates (gender and age), aged 16+

Figure 4 shows the achieved numbers and percentage breakdown by ethnic group. It should be noted that a quota was not set on ethnic group.

Figure 4 – Numbers and percentages of achieved interviews for the interviewer led survey by ethnic group (Q20) Base: Interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Ethnic group	Number of responses	% of sample
White British	862	96%
White Other	7	1%
Black or Black British	6	1%
Asian or Asian British	4	0%
Mixed	4	0%
Other ethnic group	-	-
Prefer not to say	17	2%

Figure 5 shows that 22% of the achieved sample had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more.

Figure 5 – Numbers and percentages of achieved interviews for the interviewer led survey by health status (Q19) Base: Interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Health status	Number of responses	% of sample
Physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more	195	22%
None	694	77%
Prefer not to say	11	1%

Figure 6 shows that 25% of the achieved sample were a parent, carer or guardian of a child or young person aged 16 or under.

Figure 6 – Numbers and percentages of achieved interviews for the interviewer led survey by parental status (Q18) Base: Interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Parental status	Number of responses	% of sample
Parent, carer or guardian of a child or young person aged 16 or under	228	25%
Not a parent, carer or guardian	661	73%
Prefer not to say	11	1%

Figure 7 shows the achieved numbers and percentage breakdown by ward. It should be noted that a quota was not set on ward.

Figure 7 – Numbers and percentages of achieved interviews for the interviewer led survey by ward (based on Q2) Base: Interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Ward	Number of responses	% of sample
Bebington	14	2%
Bidston and St James	46	5%
Birkenhead and Tranmere	74	8%
Bromborough	55	6%
Clatterbridge	4	0%

Ward	Number of responses	% of sample
Claughton	33	4%
Eastham	76	8%
Greasby, Frankby and Irby	15	2%
Heswall	45	5%
Hoylake and Meols	142	16%
Leasowe and Moreton East	27	3%
Liscard	65	7%
Moreton West and Saughall Massie	19	2%
New Brighton	41	5%
Oxton	32	4%
Pensby and Thingwall	7	1%
Prenton	31	3%
Rock Ferry	42	5%
Seacombe	40	4%
Upton	12	1%
Wallasey	52	6%
West Kirby and Thurstaston	28	3%

Figure 8 shows the achieved numbers and percentage breakdown by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) decile (2019). Areas in the first, second and third deciles are considered areas of higher deprivation, whereas areas in the eighth, ninth and tenth deciles are considered areas of lower deprivation. No quota was set on IMD decile.

Figure 8 – Numbers and percentages of achieved interviews for the interviewer led survey by IMD decile (based on Q2)
Base: Interviewer led survey respondents (900)

IMD decile	Number of responses	% of sample
1	249	28%
2	110	12%
3	70	8%
4	80	9%
5	24	3%
6	83	9%
7	93	10%
8	59	7%
9	49	5%
10	83	9%

Self-completion survey
The figures overleaf show the respondent profile for those who took part in the self-completion survey.

Figure 9 shows the number of completed responses achieved and percentage breakdown by stakeholder type for the self-completion survey. The majority were members of the public (95%), and there was also representation from organisations, businesses or groups (2%), schools (0%), a Member of Parliament (0%), library staff members (1%) and library volunteers (2%).

Figure 9 – Number and percentage of completed responses for the self-completion survey by stakeholder type (Q1)
Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,123)

Stakeholder type	Number of responses	% of sample
Member of the public	1,062	95%
Organisation, business or group	19	2%
School	4	0%
Member of Parliament	1	0%
Library staff member	13	1%
Library volunteer	19	2%
Other	5	0%

Figure 10 shows the number of responses achieved and the percentage breakdown by constituency area, ward and IMD decile (2019) for the self-completion survey.

Figure 10 – Number and percentage of completed responses for the self-completion survey by constituency area, ward and IMD decile (based on Q2)
Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,123)

Characteristic	Number of responses	% of sample
Constituency area		
Birkenhead	135	12%
Wallasey	208	19%
Wirral South	256	23%
Wirral West	242	22%
Unmatched	282	25%
Ward		
Bebington	44	4%
Bidston and St James	8	1%
Birkenhead and Tranmere	18	2%
Bromborough	40	4%
Clatterbridge	60	5%
Claughton	30	3%
Eastham	78	7%
Greasby, Frankby and Irby	75	7%
Heswall	34	3%
Hoylake and Meols	58	5%
Leasowe and Moreton East	21	2%
Liscard	33	3%
Moreton West and Saughall Massie	23	2%
New Brighton	47	4%
Oxton	27	2%
Pensby and Thingwall	38	3%
Prenton	33	4%
Rock Ferry	19	2%
Seacombe	26	2%
Upton	32	3%
Wallasey	58	5%
West Kirby and Thurstaton	39	3%
Unmatched	282	25%
IMD decile		
1	105	9%
2	67	6%
3	77	7%

Characteristic	Number of responses	% of sample
4	77	7%
5	55	5%
6	98	9%
7	85	8%
8	119	11%
9	104	9%
10	57	5%
Unmatched	279	25%

Figure 11 shows the achieved sample by demographic characteristics for the self-completion survey.

Figure 11 – Number and percentage of completed responses for the self-completion survey by demographic characteristics (Q3, Q4, Q18 to Q20)
Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,123)

Characteristic	Number of responses	% of sample
Gender		
Male	272	24%
Female	784	70%
Other	8	1%
Prefer not to say	59	5%
Age group		
16-24	19	2%
25-44	328	29%
45-64	377	34%
65+	375	33%
Prefer not to say	24	2%
Ethnic group		
White British	963	86%
White Other	41	4%
Black or Black British	2	0%
Asian or Asian British	8	1%
Mixed	11	1%
Other ethnic group	5	0%
Prefer not to say	93	8%
Health status		
Physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more	248	22%
None	772	69%
Prefer not to say	103	9%
Parental status		
Parent, carer or guardian of a child or young person aged 16 or under	390	35%
Not parent, carer or guardian	667	59%
Prefer not to say	66	6%

1.6   Focus group details

To supplement the quantitative consultation activity, a programme of qualitative consultation activity was conducted simultaneously in the form of focus groups. *Figure 12* shows the date of each group, the location or format, the target group, and the number of participants. In total, there were 43 participants across the focus groups.

Figure 12 – Focus groups

Date	Target group	Format/location	No. of participants
29 March 2022	Friends of the Library group	Online	6
29 March 2022	Area of higher deprivation	Rock Ferry Library	5
29 March 2022	Area of higher deprivation	Seacombe Children's Centre	6
29 March 2022	Parents/carers/guardians	Online	5
30 March 2022	Older people (65+)	Bebington Central Library	6
4 April 2022	Younger people (35 and under)	Online	4
5 April 2022	Secondary school pupils from Hilbre High School	Online	6
5 April 2022	Long-term health problems and conditions	Online	5

A topic guide, agreed with Wirral Council, was used by the researchers to moderate the groups. The guide was designed to ensure all topics of discussion were covered, but also to be flexible to not constrain the flow of discussion and debate. The topic guide can be found in **Appendix 2**.

Participants were recruited from those who expressed interest in attending in the survey. Participants were recruited to ensure a mix by gender, age group, and area of the borough.

The focus groups lasted around an hour. The groups were recorded to allow playback by researchers and for notes to be made for analysis. Feedback from the focus groups is reported as broad themes across all of the groups in the report, apart from where there were stark differences between the attitudes of the different groups. Anonymous verbatim comments are used to illustrate certain viewpoints where relevant.

1.7   Interpreting survey responses

Interpreting percentages
This report contains a number of tables and charts used to display survey responses. In some instances, the responses may not add up to 100%. There are several reasons why this might happen:

- The question may have allowed each respondent to give more than one answer
- Only the most common responses may be shown in the table or chart
- Individual percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number so the total may come to 99% or 101%
- A response of less than 0.5% will be shown as 0%

In some cases, response options are not shown in figures if they were not selected by any respondents.

Responses from the interviewer led survey and the self-completion survey have been combined, but in some cases differences in the results between the two methodologies have been explored and commented on where appropriate.

For the analysis of some questions, response options have been grouped together to provide an overall level. For example, *very positive impact* and *positive impact* have been grouped and shown as *overall positive impact* and *very negative impact* and *negative impact* have been grouped as *overall negative*

impact. Where these combined percentages do not equal the overall level reported (being 1% higher or lower), this is due to percentages being rounded to the nearest whole number.

Base sizes
Base sizes vary by question as the self-completion survey included a paper survey completion option, which meant some questions were missed out by some respondents. Survey routing also meant that some questions were asked to only some respondents, based on their answer to a previous question.

Sampling tolerances
As the survey was undertaken by a sample of people across the borough, all results are subject to sampling tolerances.

For example, based on an approximate total population of 323,000 in the Wirral Borough (2019 estimate), a sample of 900 respondents (interviewer led survey) gives results that are accurate to approximately +/- 3.3% at the 95% confidence interval. This means with a result of 50%, we can be 95% sure that if we interviewed all residents the result would be between 46.7% and 53.3%. However, it should be kept in mind that for subgroups the error of margin is wider.

Subgroup analysis
Subgroup analysis by age group, gender, Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) decile, stakeholder type (i.e. users and non-users, library type etc.), health status, parental status, and constituency area of the borough has been undertaken to explore the results in detail. In some cases where base sizes for groups are very small, they have been combined to create a larger group to allow for analysis. Subgroup analysis was undertaken by ethnic group as well, but no differences were seen between ethnic groups in the survey results, so no analysis has been shown.

Subgroup analysis is clearly marked and is only shown for a response for a question where differences exist at the 95% confidence level according to the z-test. The z-test is a commonly used statistical test used to highlight whether differences in results are 'significant'. By this we mean that we can say with 95% confidence that we would see a difference if the total population within a group took part in the survey.

It should be noted that the percentages shown in the subgroup analysis reflect the proportion of the subgroup who answered the question and gave a particular response.

Open-end responses
A number of questions in the survey allowed respondents to provide open-end responses in verbatim format. These responses were thematically coded for analysis by grouping similar responses together, to show frequency of themes in table format.

1.8   Interpreting feedback from focus groups

When interpreting the qualitative research information collected via focus groups, the findings differ to those collected via a quantitative survey methodology because they are not statistically significant. They are collected to provide additional insight and greater understanding based on in-depth discussion and deliberation, which is not possible via a quantitative survey. For example, if the majority of participants in a group hold a certain opinion, this may or may not apply to the majority of the target audience. Qualitative findings are collected by speaking in much greater depth to a smaller number of individuals.

Focus group discussions were digitally recorded, and notes made to draw out common and key themes. Only common and relevant themes are detailed in the report, rather than every viewpoint that was expressed. Verbatim quotations have been used as evidence of qualitative research findings where relevant. Quotations are anonymous.

1.9   Terminology and clarifications

Throughout this report:

- Those who took part in the online surveys are referred to as 'respondents'
- Those who took part in focus groups are referred to as 'participants'
- Wirral Council is referred to as 'the council'
- The Wirral Borough is referred to as 'the borough'
- 'Library users' have been defined as those who said in the survey that they used a library
- 'Parents, carers and guardians' refers to those who said they were a parent, carer or guardian of a child or young person aged 16 or under in the survey
- The survey which could be completed by respondents online and using a paper questionnaire is referred to as the 'self-completion survey' and the telephone and face to face on-street survey is referred to as the 'interviewer led survey'
- 'Libraries affected by *Option 3 (recommended option)*' refers to libraries that will become self-serve libraries or that will close under that option.

1.10 Acknowledgments

Enventure Research would like to thank James Roberts, Kirsten Hume, Peter Aspinall and Mark Payne from Wirral Council, and Paul Lloyd from Hilbre High School for their help and cooperation on this project, and to express gratitude to everyone who took part in the consultation programme.
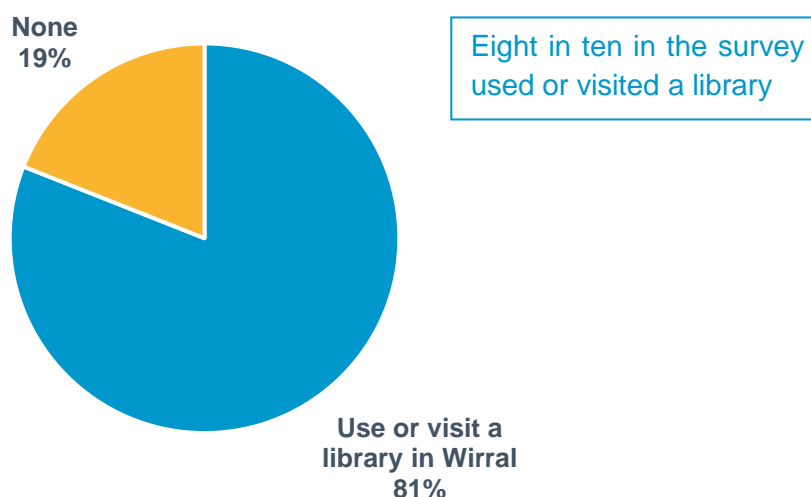
2. Consultation survey findings

2.1 Use of library service

Overall, eight in ten survey respondents said they used or visited a Wirral library (81%) and one in five did not use the service (19%). This is shown in *Figure 13*.

Figure 13 – Which Wirral library, if any, do you use or visit most often? (Q5)
Base: All respondents (2,019)

Eight in ten in the survey used or visited a library

Library usage was higher in the self-completion survey (96%) than in the interviewer led survey (62%), as shown in *Figure 14*.

Figure 14 – Which Wirral library, if any, do you use or visit most often? (Q5) – by survey type
Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,119); interviewer led survey respondents (900)
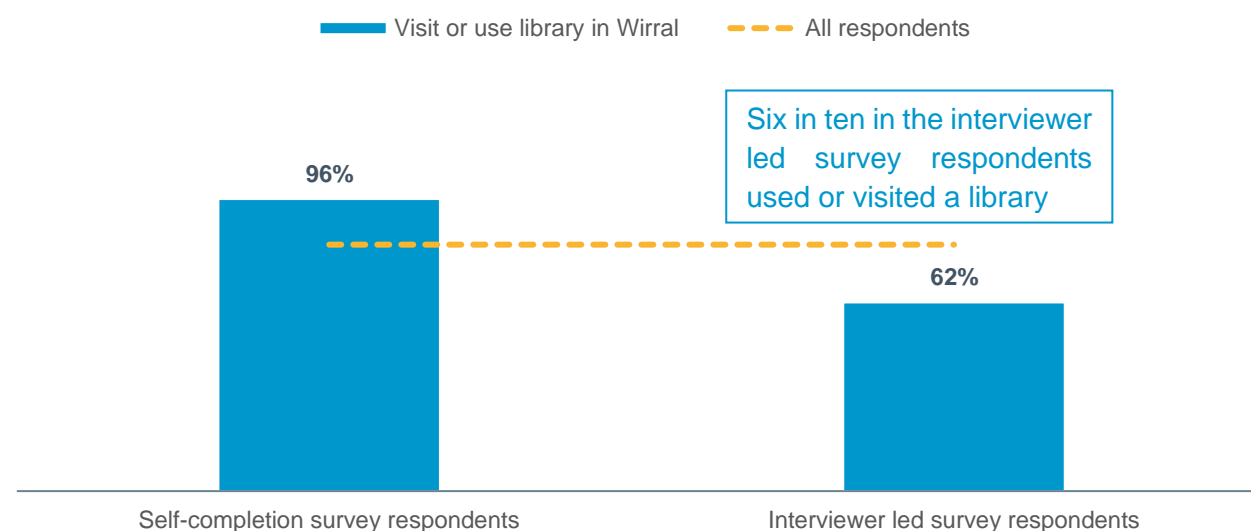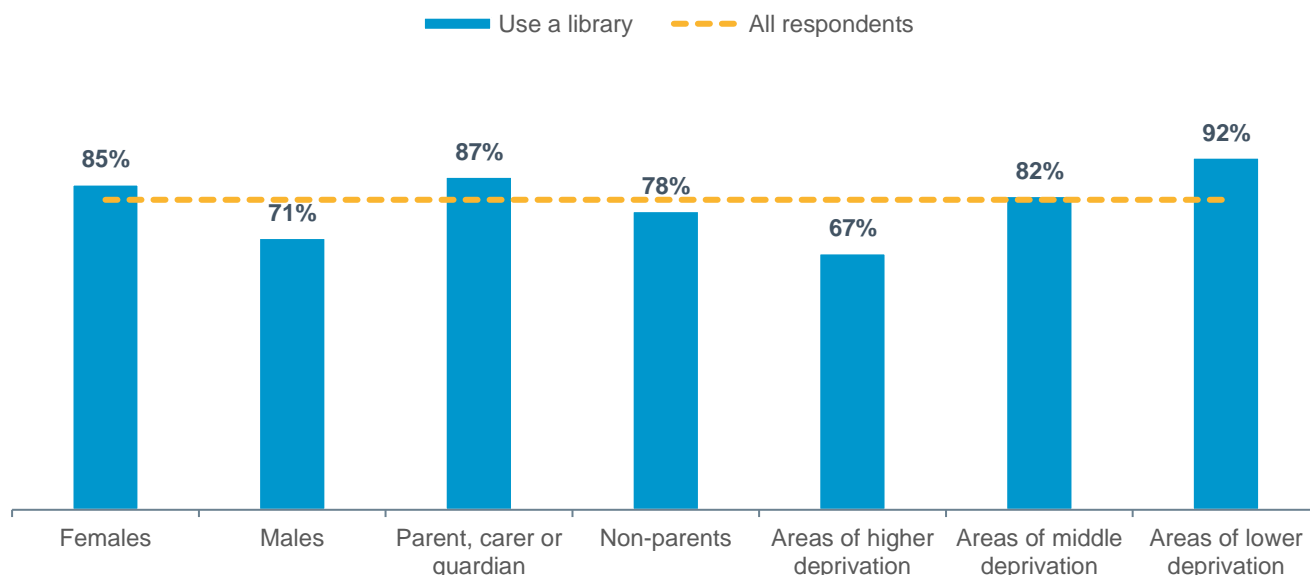

Six in ten in the interviewer led survey respondents used or visited a library

Figure 15 shows subgroup analysis by gender, parental status and deprivation levels. As can be seen, females were more likely to be a user than males (85% compared with 71%). Parents, carers or guardians were more likely to be users (87%) than those who were not (78%), and library usage was higher amongst those living in areas of lower deprivation (92%) than those living in areas of higher deprivation (67%).

Figure 15 – Which Wirral library, if any, do you use or visit most often? (Q5) – by gender, parental status and deprivation levels
Base: Males (1,264); females (681); parents/carers/guardians (617); non-parents (1,326); areas of higher deprivation (678); areas of middle deprivation (595); areas of lower deprivation (471)

As shown in *Figure 16*, library usage increases by age, with those aged 16-24 least likely to be a user (55%) and those aged 65+ most likely to use a library (88%).

Figure 16 – Which Wirral library, if any, do you use or visit most often? (Q5) – by age group
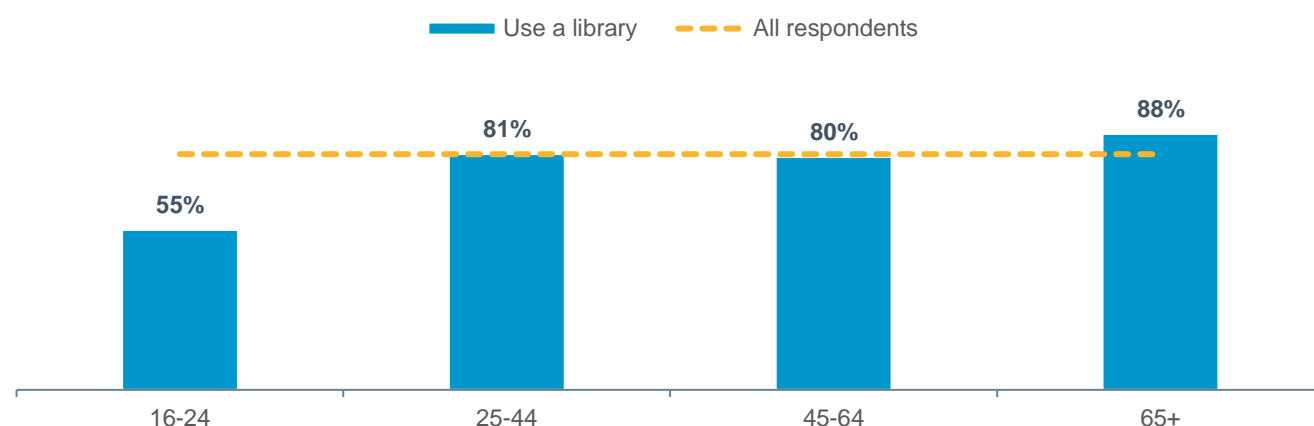*Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (565); 45-64 (634); 65+ (632)*

Figure 17 shows the libraries or services that respondents said they visited or used at an overall level (ordered by frequency) and by survey type. As shown, Wallasey Central Library was the most used overall (10%), followed by Birkenhead Central Library (8%) and West Kirby Library (8%). However, there were some differences by survey type. In the self-completion survey, Wallasey Central Library was most commonly used (13%), followed by Bebington Central Library (11%) and Birkenhead Central Library (8%). In contrast, in the interviewer led survey West Kirby Library was most commonly used (9%), followed by Birkenhead Central Library (8%) and Hoylake Library (8%).

Figure 17 – Which Wirral library, if any, do you use or visit most often? (Q5) – by survey type
Base: Overall (2,019); self-completion survey respondents (1,119); interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Library	Overall	Self-completion survey	Interviewer led survey
Wallasey Central Library	10%	13%	6%
Birkenhead Central Library	8%	8%	8%
West Kirby Library	8%	7%	9%
Bebington Central Library	7%	11%	3%
Hoylake Library	6%	4%	8%
Bromborough Library	6%	7%	5%
Heswall Library	6%	6%	5%
Eastham Library	5%	6%	4%
Greasby Library	4%	7%	1%
Wallasey Village Library	3%	5%	2%
Moreton Library	3%	3%	2%
Upton Library	3%	5%	1%
Pensby Library	2%	3%	0%
Rock Ferry Library	2%	2%	2%
Irby Library	2%	2%	1%
Seacombe Library	2%	2%	1%
Prenton Library	1%	2%	0%
Higher Bebington Library	1%	2%	0%
St James Library	1%	1%	1%
Online service	1%	1%	-
Woodchurch Library	1%	0%	1%
Beechwood Library	0%	0%	1%
Leasowe Library	0%	-	0%
Ridgeway Library	0%	0%	0%
Home reader service	0%	0%	-
None, I do not use the Wirral Library Service	19%	4%	38%

2.2   Option preference

Survey respondents were shown options for the future of the Wirral's library services, which had previously been presented to councillors on the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee to consider. The options included a recommended option (Option 3). These options are detailed in *Figure 18*.

Figure 18 – Options for the future of the library service

Option 1 would see the consolidation of the library estate into one excellent service point in Birkenhead Central Library. Although there would be one remaining physical library, this would be supported by a mobile library, online library, home reader service, and Schools' Library Service. This would allow significant focus of available resources to invest and enhance the service offer to all communities in Wirral. This option would also contribute a saving of £2.2m towards the council's budget gap in the next financial year.

Option 2 would see the consolidation of the library estate into four excellent service points across the borough in Birkenhead Central Library, Bebington Central Library, Wallasey Central Library and West Kirby Library. This would increase geographic coverage across the borough, as well as being supported by a mobile library, online library, home reader service, and Schools' Library Service. This would allow significant focus of available resources to invest and enhance the service whilst maintaining more physical service points for residents across the borough. This option would also contribute a saving of £1m towards the council's budget gap in the next financial year.

Option 3 (recommended option) would see the service retain eight staffed sites across the borough (Birkenhead Central Library, Bebington Central Library, Wallasey Central Library, West Kirby Library, Eastham Library, Heswall Library, Upton Library, Moreton Library), as well as five self-serve sites (Beechwood Library, St James Library, Ridgeway Library, Seacombe Library, Leasowe Library). This option is a balance between available resources and maintaining optimal geographic and fair coverage across the borough for those that still wish to use a physical library provision. This would also be supported by a mobile library, online library, home reader service, and Schools' Library Service. This option would also contribute a saving of £814k towards the council's budget gap in the next financial year.

The Wirral Council Policy & Resources Committee made a recommendation to the council in relation to libraries to make sufficient monies available to enable option 3 (recommended option) to be amended to include Greasby and Rock Ferry libraries. Also allowing all libraries to continue to operate until 1st November 2022 whilst expressions of interest for their community asset transfer are sought and business cases developed and assessed. This was referred to in the survey as *Option 3 as amended*.
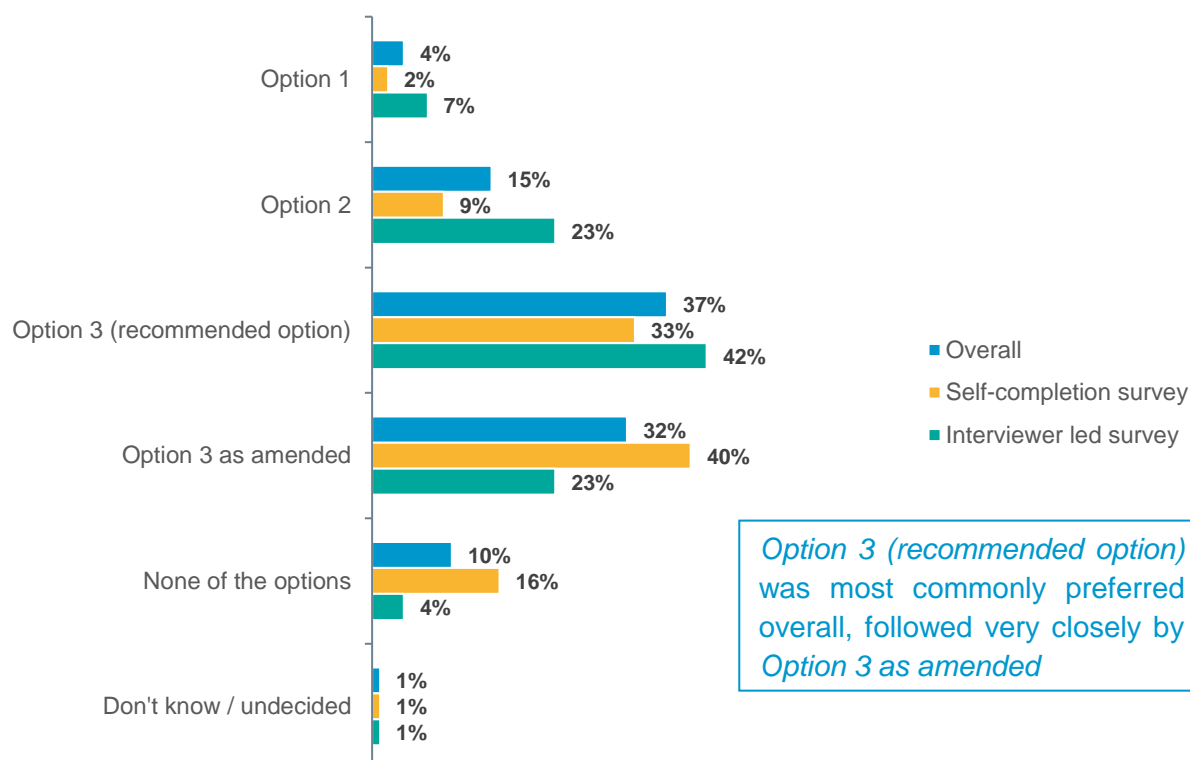
Survey respondents were asked which option they preferred. *Figure 19* shows the results from this question at an overall level and by survey type. At an overall level, *Option 3 (recommended option)* was the most commonly preferred by 37%, followed by *Option 3 as amended* (32%). However, there were stark differences by survey type, with *Option 3 (recommended option)* the most commonly preferred in the interviewer led survey (42%) and *Option 3 as amended* was most common in the self-completion survey (40%).

Much smaller proportions preferred *Option 2* (15% overall, 9% in the self-completion survey, and 23% in the interviewer led survey) and *Option 1* (4% overall, 2% in the self-completion survey and 7% in the interviewer led survey).

One in ten (10%) said they did not prefer any of the options and 1% said they did not know or were undecided. This means that 89% favoured at least one of the options presented.

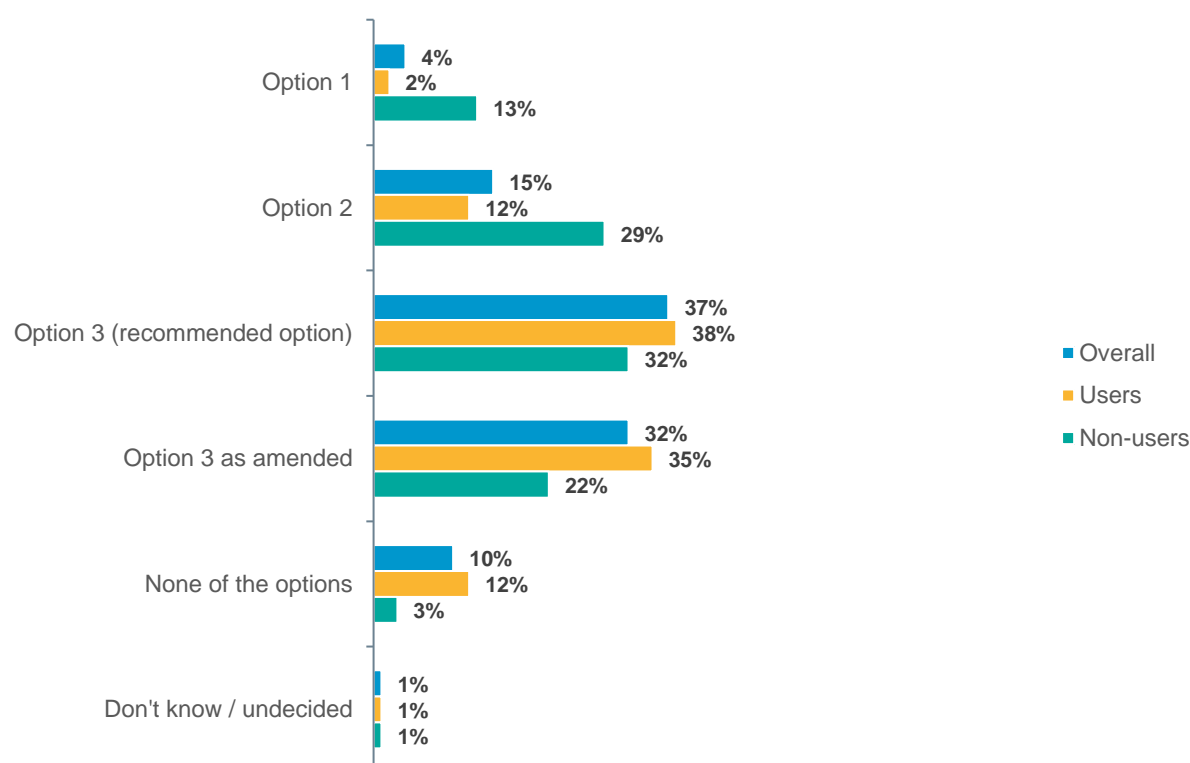*Figure 19 – Which option, if any, do you prefer? (Q6) – by survey type*
Base: Overall (2,019); self-completion survey respondents (1,119); interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Option 1
- Overall: 4%
- Self-completion survey: 2%
- Interviewer led survey: 7%

Option 2
- Overall: 15%
- Self-completion survey: 9%
- Interviewer led survey: 23%

Option 3 (recommended option)
- Overall: 37%
- Self-completion survey: 33%
- Interviewer led survey: 42%

Option 3 as amended
- Overall: 32%
- Self-completion survey: 40%
- Interviewer led survey: 23%

None of the options
- Overall: 10%
- Self-completion survey: 16%
- Interviewer led survey: 4%

Don't know / undecided
- Overall: 1%
- Self-completion survey: 1%
- Interviewer led survey: 1%

■ Overall
■ Self-completion survey
■ Interviewer led survey

Option 3 (recommended option) was most commonly preferred overall, followed very closely by Option 3 as amended

There were some differences in preference between library users and non-users. For both *Option 3 (recommended option)* was most commonly preferred (38% and 32%). However, non-users were more likely than users to prefer *Option 1* (13% compared with 2%) and *Option 2* (29% compared with 12%), whereas users were more likely to prefer *Option 3 (recommended option)* than non-users (38% compared with 32%) and *Option 3 as amended* (35% compared with 22%). This is shown in *Figure 20*.

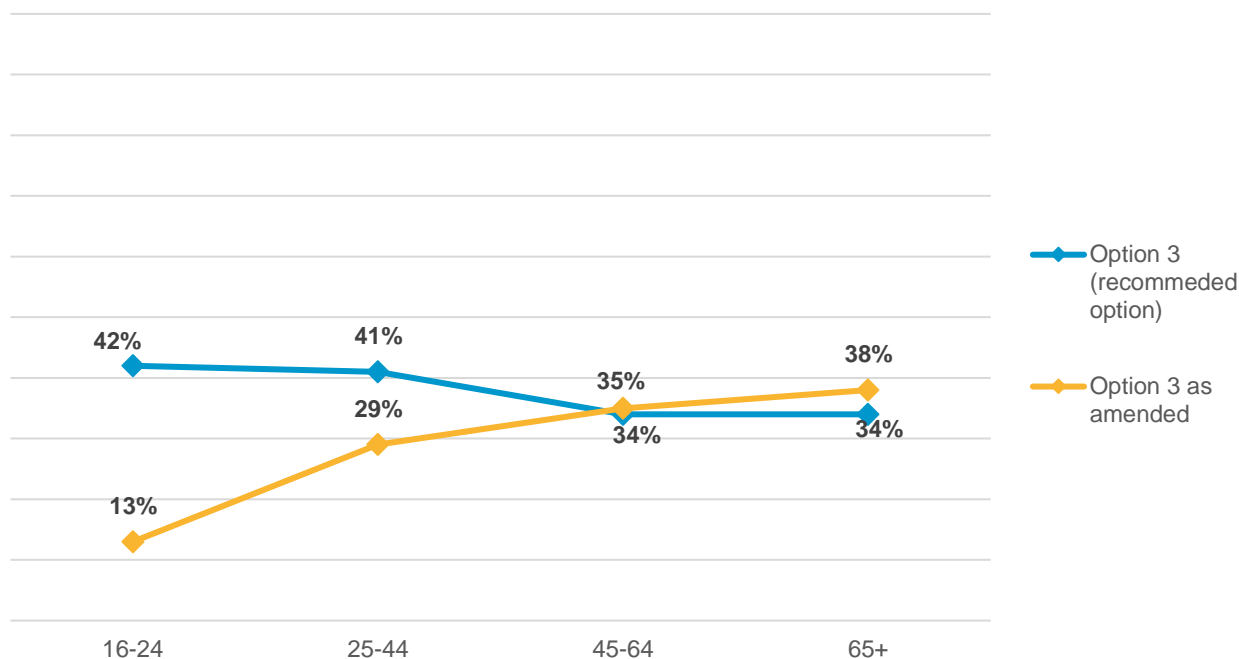*Figure 20 – Which option, if any, do you prefer? (Q6) – by library usage*
Base: Overall (2,019); users (1,635); non-users (381)

Option 1
- Overall: 4%
- Users: 2%
- Non-users: 13%

Option 2
- Overall: 15%
- Users: 12%
- Non-users: 29%

Option 3 (recommended option)
- Overall: 37%
- Users: 38%
- Non-users: 32%

Option 3 as amended
- Overall: 32%
- Users: 35%
- Non-users: 22%

None of the options
- Overall: 10%
- Users: 12%
- Non-users: 3%

Don't know / undecided
- Overall: 1%
- Users: 1%
- Non-users: 1%

■ Overall
■ Users
■ Non-users

By age group, preference for *Option 3 (recommended option)* fell by age, with those in the younger age groups more likely to prefer that option (42% and 41%) than those in the older age groups (both 34%). In contrast, preference for *Option 3 as amended* increased by age, with those in the older age groups more likely to prefer it (38% and 35%) than younger age groups (13% and 29%). This is summarised in *Figure 21*.

Figure 21 – Which option, if any, do you prefer? (Q6) – preference for Option 3 (recommended option) and Option 3 as amended – by age group
Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (564); 45-64 (635); 65+ (632)

There were also differences in preference by constituency area. As shown in *Figure 22*, *Option 3 (recommended option)* was most commonly preferred in Wallasey (38%) and in Wirral South (48%). By contrast, *Option 3 as amended* was most commonly preferred in Birkenhead (36%) and Wirral West (38%).

Figure 22 – Which option, if any, do you prefer? (Q6) – preference for Option 3 (recommended option) and Option 3 as amended – by constituency area
Base: Birkenhead residents (393); Wallasey residents (452); Wirral South residents (450); Wirral West residents (445)
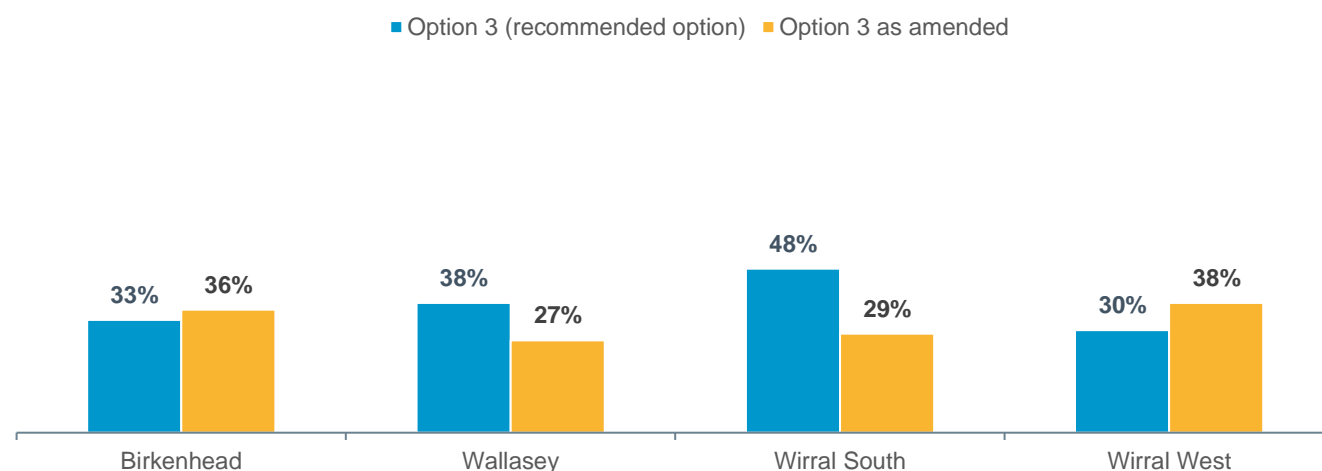
Figure 23 – Changes to the library service under Option 3 (recommended option)

> **Option 3 (recommended option)** would see some libraries close across the borough. These would be:
>
> - Bromborough Library
> - Greasby Library
> - Higher Bebington Library
> - Hoylake Library
> - Irby Library
> - Pensby Library
> - Prenton Library
> - Rock Ferry Library
> - Wallasey Village Library
> - Woodchurch Library
>
> In addition, five libraries would become self-serve sites:
>
> - Beechwood Library
> - Leasowe Library
> - Ridgeway Library
> - Seacombe Library
> - St James Library
>
> These libraries are referred to in the report as *libraries affected by Option 3 (recommended option)*.
>
> Under **Option 3 as amended** Greasby Library and Rock Ferry Library would remain open as staffed libraries.

Figure 24 shows preference for each option for those who said they use a library that is affected by *Option 3 (recommended option)*. As can be seen, amongst these respondents *Option 3 as amended* was most commonly preferred (35%), followed by *Option 3 (recommended option)* (28%).

Figure 24 – Which option, if any, do you prefer? (Q6)
Base: Those who use a library affected by Option 3 (616)

Option 1 — 2%
Option 2 — 9%
Option 3 (recommended option) — 28%
Option 3 as amended — 35%
None of the options — 24%
Don't know / Undecided — 1%

Around six in ten prefer either *Option 3 (recommended option)* or *Option 3 as amended*

Respondents who said they preferred none of the options were asked if they had any other ideas for how the council can provide a comprehensive and efficient library service that is sustainable for the future and were able to provide their comments verbatim. As shown in *Figure 25*, the most common theme was the suggestion of saving money elsewhere or stopping wasting money (28%), followed by requests to not close libraries (21%). A further 18% mentioned that libraries are important to communities or as social hubs and a similar proportion suggested community-run libraries or using volunteers (17%).

Figure 25 – Have you got any other ideas for how the council can provide a comprehensive and efficient library service that is sustainable for the future? (Q7)
Base: Those who did not prefer any of the options and provided a response (155)

Theme	%
Save money elsewhere/stop wasting money	28%
Don't close libraries	25%
Amend the options/keep another library open	21%
Libraries are important to communities/social hubs	18%
Community-run libraries/use volunteers	17%
Promote/encourage greater use of libraries	10%
Generate income (e.g. cafés, room hire)	9%
Improve libraries/invest more/modernise	8%
Libraries are important to children/for education	8%
Libraries should be local/in walking distance	6%
Libraries vital for low income/disadvantaged	6%
Listen to/value library staff	5%
Campaign against cuts/request government funding	5%
Libraries improve mental health/wellbeing	4%
Dislike idea of mobile libraries	4%
Dislike idea of self-serve/unstaffed libraries	4%
Complaint about the council	4%
Close more/all libraries	3%
Council has responsibility/duty to provide libraries	3%
Reduce opening times instead of closing libraries	3%
Complaint about consultation	2%

2.3   Impact of options on service provision

Survey respondents were asked what impact they thought each option would have on service provision in the borough. Respondents were able to choose from a scale from *very positive impact* to *very negative impact* and were also able to choose *no impact* or *don't know*.

As shown in *Figure 26*, a much larger proportion thought that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision across the borough than an *overall positive impact* (85% compared with 7%). Similarly, a larger proportion thought that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision than an *overall positive impact* (70% compared with 17%). In regard to *Option 3 (recommended option)*, a larger proportion thought it would have an *overall positive impact* than an *overall negative impact* (50% compared with 31%). The gap between the proportion who thought that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall positive impact* and an *overall negative impact* was similar to *Option 3 (recommended option)* (difference of 20 percentage points compared with 19 percentage points). The proportions who thought *Option 3 (recommended option)* and *Option 3 as amended* would have a positive impact were similar (50% and 47%).
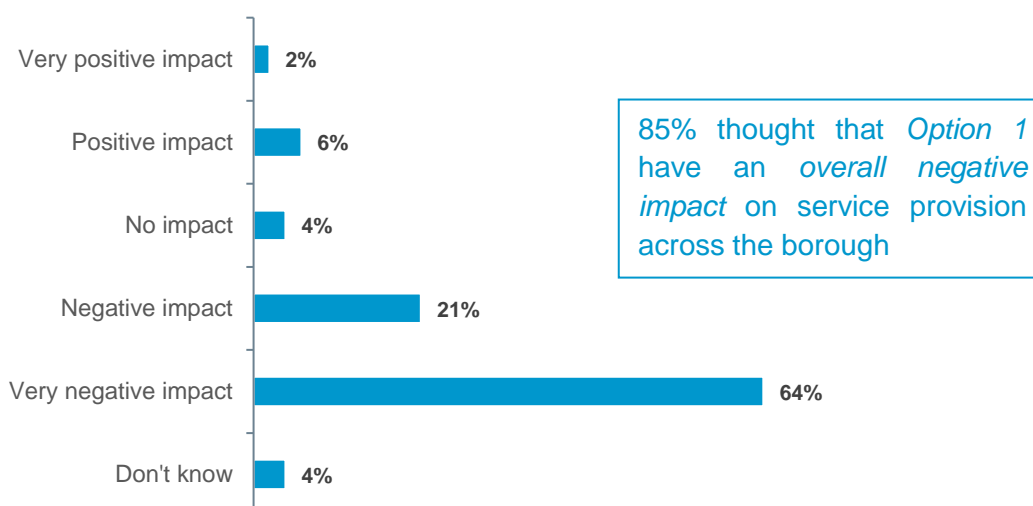
Figure 26 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? (Q8)
Base: All respondents (2,005)

Larger proportions thought that *Option 3 (recommended option)* and *Option 3 as amended* would have a positive impact than a negative impact on service provision

Option 1

As shown in *Figure 27*, almost two thirds thought that *Option 1* would have a *very negative* impact on service provision across the borough (64%), which was the most common response. A further 21% thought the impact would be *negative*, resulting in 85% thinking that the option would have an *overall negative impact*. Only small proportions thought that *Option 1* would have a *very positive impact* (2%), a *positive impact* (6%) or *no impact* (4%).
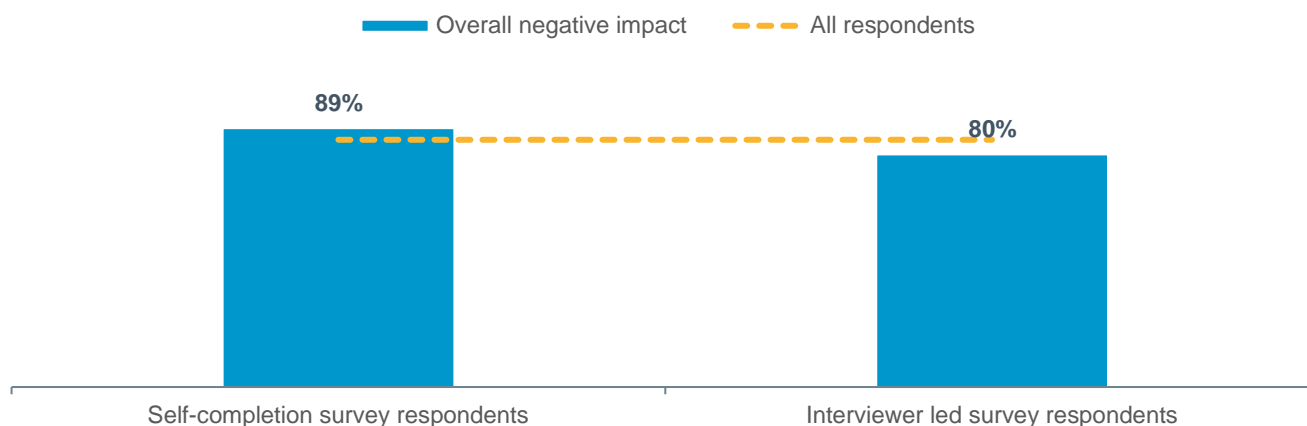
Figure 27 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 1 (Q8)
Base: All respondents (1,992)

85% thought that *Option 1* have an *overall negative impact* on service provision across the borough

By survey type, respondents in the self-completion survey were more likely to think that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* than in the interviewer led survey (89% compared with 80%). This is shown in *Figure 28*.

Figure 28 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 1 overall negative impact (Q8) – by survey type
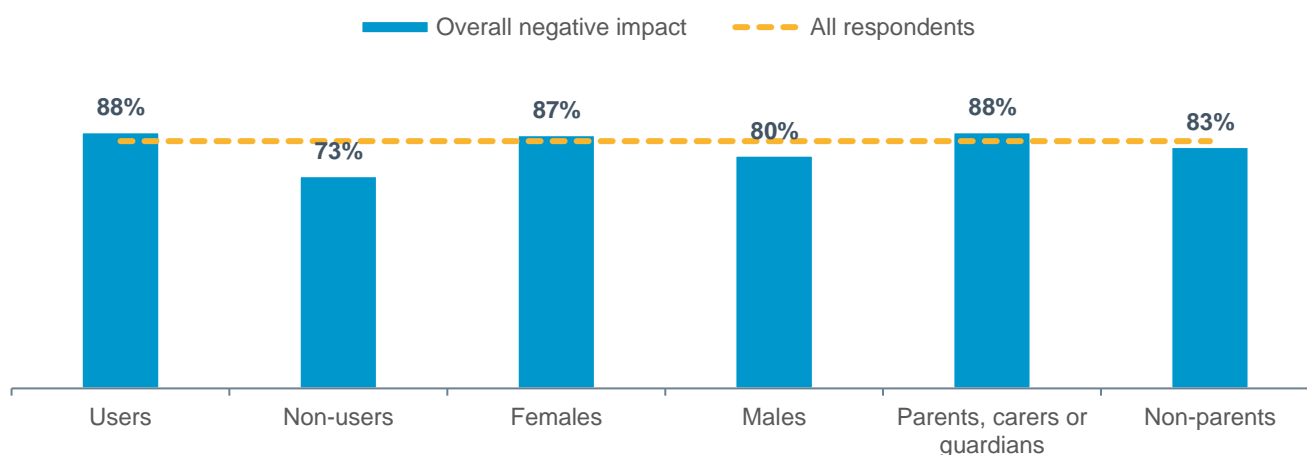*Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,092); interviewer led survey respondents (900)*

As shown in *Figure 29*, there were some key differences by subgroups. Users were more likely than non-users to think that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* (88% compared with 73%), as were females compared with males (87% compared with 80%). Parents, carers and guardians were also more likely to think the option would have an *overall negative impact* than those who were not a parent, carer or guardian (88% compared with 83%).

Figure 29 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 1 overall negative impact (Q8) – by library usage, gender and parental status
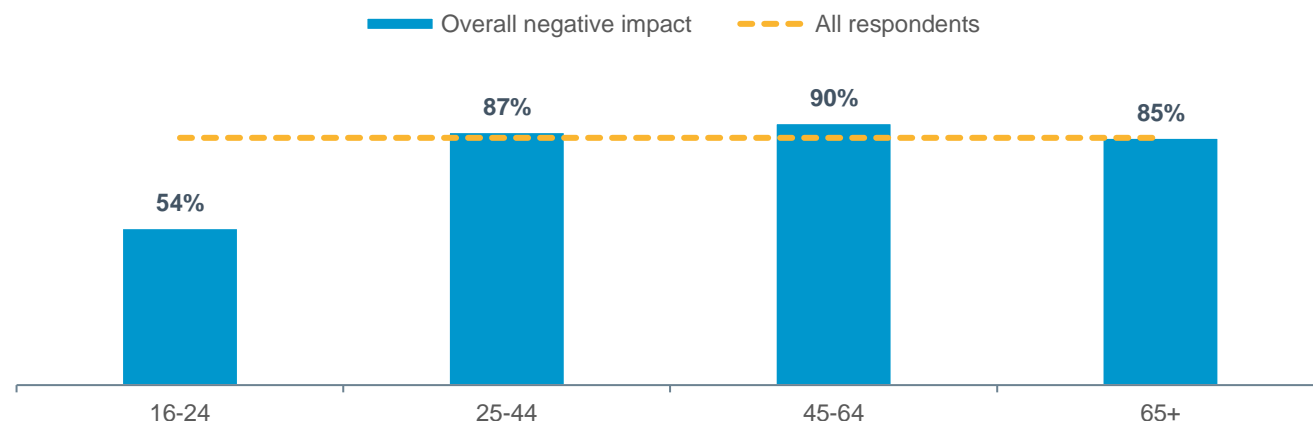*Base: Users (1,609); non-users (381); females (1,253); males (668); parents, carers or guardians (611); non-parents (1,307)*

As shown in *Figure 30*, those in the youngest age group (16-24) were less likely to think that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision across the borough (54%) than other age groups (85% to 90%).

Figure 30 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 1 overall negative impact (Q8) – by age group
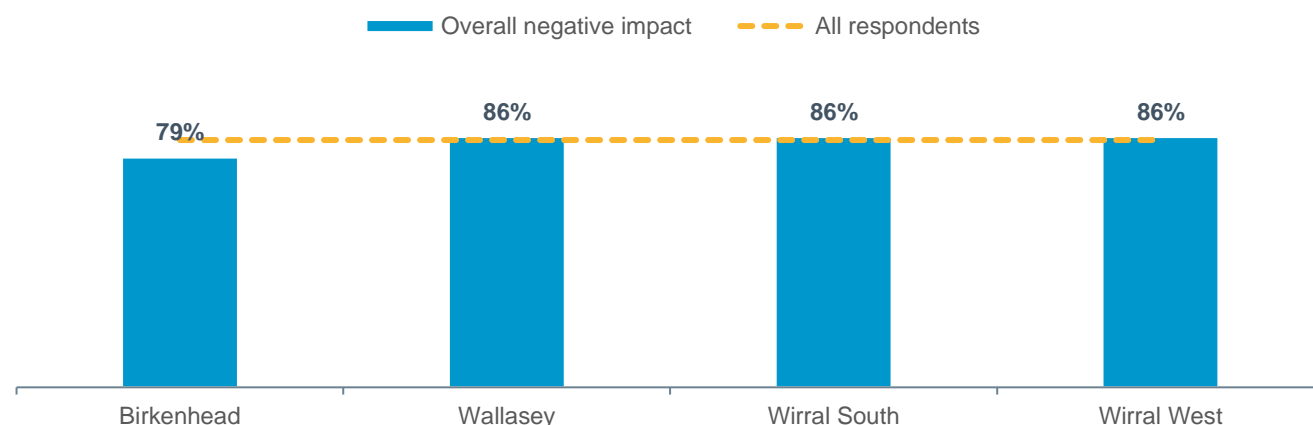*Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (563); 45-64 (631); 65+ (611)*

By constituency area, those living in Birkenhead were less likely to think that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision across the borough (79%) than those living in other areas (all 86%), as shown in *Figure 31*.

Figure 31 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 1 overall negative impact (Q8) – by constituency area
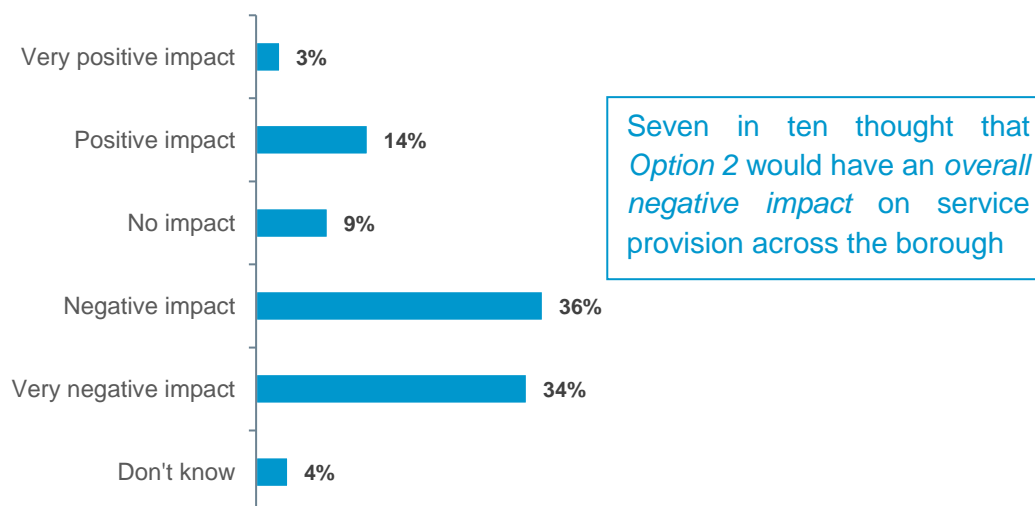*Base: Birkenhead (391); Wallasey (448); Wirral South (444); Wirral West (440)*

Option 2

As shown in *Figure 32*, over a third thought that *Option 2* would have a *negative impact* on service provision (36%) and a similar proportion (34%) thought it would have a *very negative impact*, resulting in seven in ten thinking it would have an *overall negative impact* (70%). Smaller proportions thought that *Option 2* would have a *very positive impact* (3%), a *positive impact* (14%) or *no impact* (9%).

Figure 32 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 2 (Q8)
Base: All respondents (1,992)

> Seven in ten thought that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision across the borough

As shown in *Figure 33*, respondents in the self-completion survey were more likely to think that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* than those in the interviewer led survey (82% compared with 56%).

Figure 33 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 2 overall negative impact (Q8) – by survey type
Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,092); interviewer led survey respondents (900)
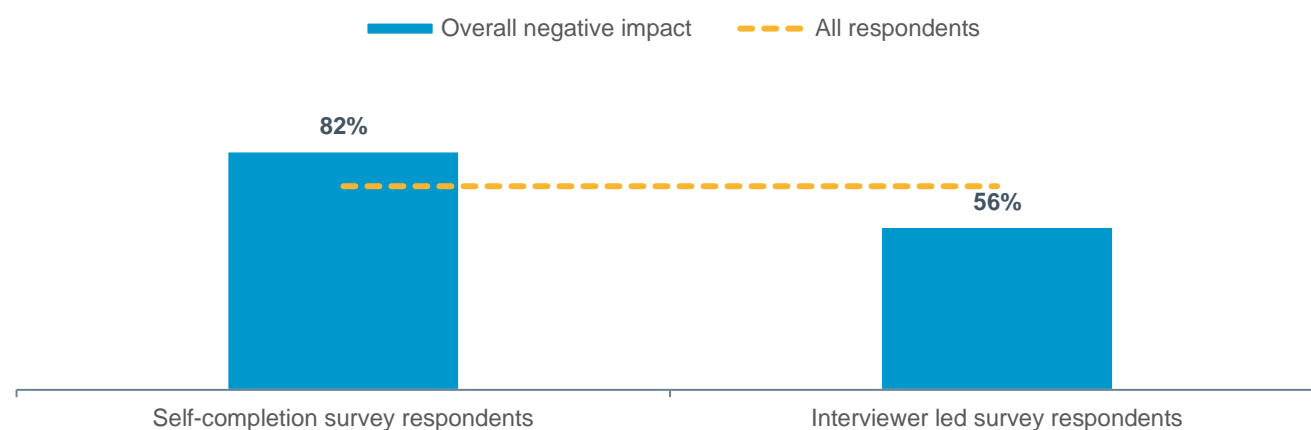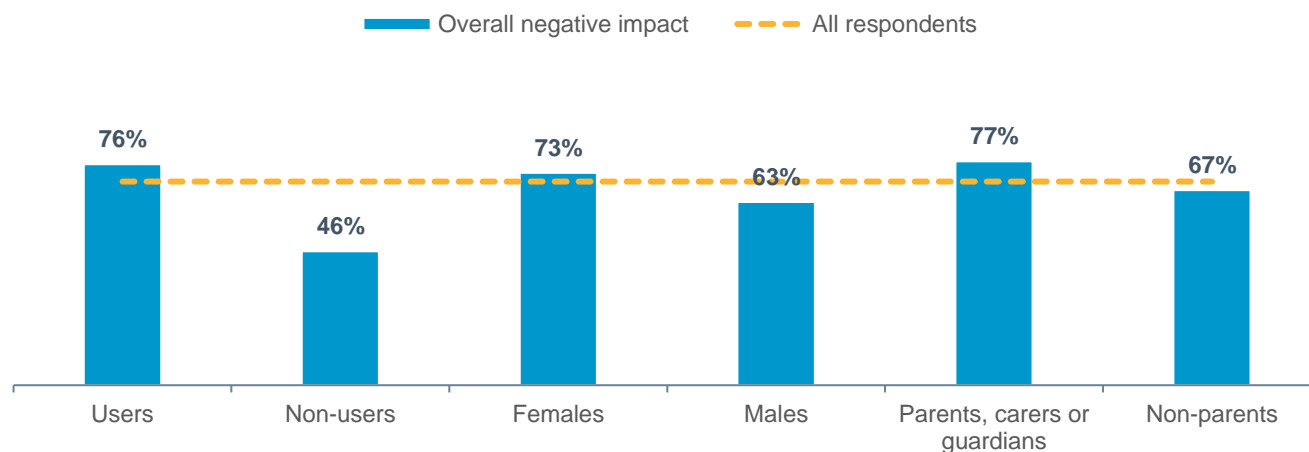
Figure 34 shows some key differences between subgroups. As can be seen, users were more likely than non-users to think that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* (76% compared with 46%), as were females compared with males (73% compared with 63%). Parents, carers and guardians were also more likely to think the option would have an *overall negative impact* than those who were not a parent, carer or guardian (77% compared with 67%).

Figure 34 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 2 overall negative impact (Q8) – by library usage, gender and parental status
Base: Users (1,608); non-users (381); females (1,252); males (668); parents, carers or guardians (611); non-parents (1,306)

As shown in *Figure 35*, those in the youngest age group (16-24) were less likely to think that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision across the borough (31%) than other age groups (71% to 77%).

Figure 35 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 2 overall negative impact (Q8) – by age group
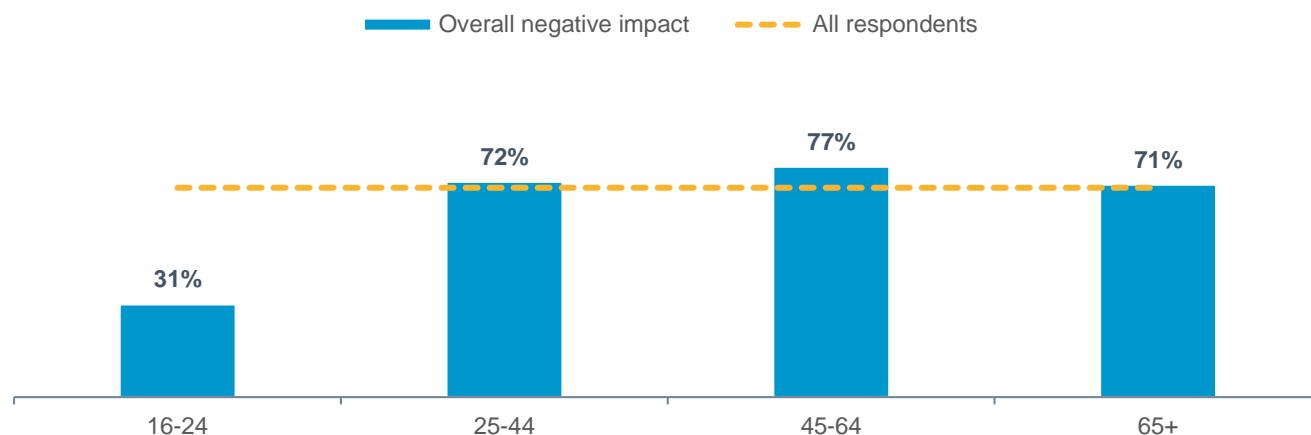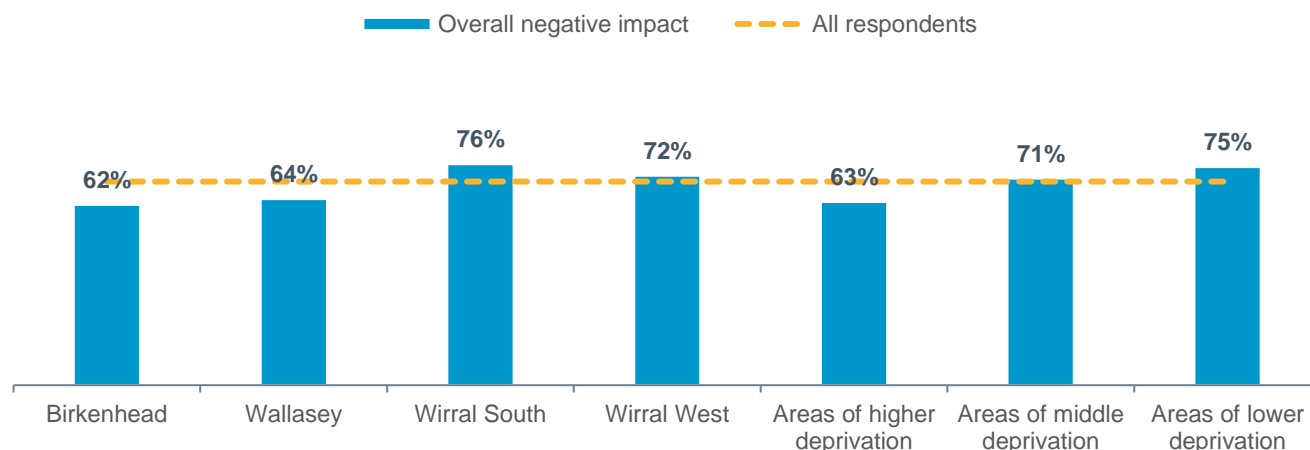*Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (563); 45-64 (631); 65+ (611)*

Figure 36 shows the breakdown by constituency area and deprivation levels. As can be seen, those living in Wirral South and Wirral West were more likely to think *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision (76% and 72% respectively) than those in Birkenhead and Wallasey (62% and 64%). Those in areas of middle and lower deprivation were more likely to say that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* (71% and 75%) than those in areas of higher deprivation (63%).

Figure 36 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 2 overall negative impact (Q8) – by constituency area and deprivation levels
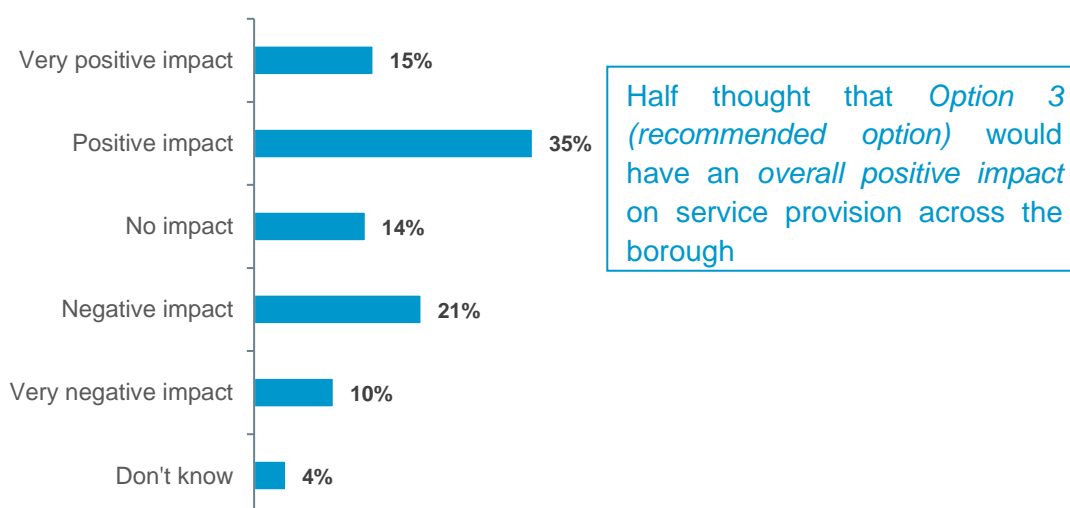*Base: Birkenhead (391); Wallasey (447); Wirral South (445); Wirral West (437); areas of higher deprivation (672); areas of middle deprivation (590); areas of lower deprivation (460)*

Option 3 (recommended option)

As shown in *Figure 37*, 15% of survey respondents thought that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have a *very positive impact* on service provision and a further 35% thought it would have a *positive impact*, resulting in 50% who thought it would have an *overall positive impact*. One in five thought it would have a *negative impact* (21%) and a further 10% thought it would be a *very negative impact*, giving 31% who thought it would have an *overall negative impact*. A further 14% thought it would have *no impact* on service provision.

Figure 37 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 (Q8)
Base: All respondents (2,005)

> Half thought that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall positive impact* on service provision across the borough

As seen with previous options, self-completion survey respondents were more likely to think that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision than those in the interviewer led survey (45% compared with 14%), and less likely to think it would have a positive impact (39% compared with 65%). This is shown in *Figure 38*.

Figure 38 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 (Q8) – by survey type
Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,105); interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Impact on service provision	Overall	Self-completion survey	Interviewer led survey
Overall positive	50%	39%	65%
No impact	14%	11%	18%
Overall negative	31%	45%	14%
Don't know	4%	5%	3%

As shown in *Figure 39*, library users were more likely to think that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* than non-users (36% compared with 9%) and less likely to think it would have an *overall positive impact* (48% compared with 60%).

Figure 39 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 (Q8) – by library usage
Base: Library users (1,622); non-users (381)

Impact on service provision	Overall	Users	Non-users
Overall positive	50%	48%	60%
No impact	14%	11%	27%
Overall negative	31%	36%	9%
Don't know	4%	4%	4%

As shown in *Figure 40*, those in the older age groups were more likely to think that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision across the borough (36% and 34%) than younger age groups (8% and 28%). By contrast, those in the younger age groups were more likely to think that the option would have an *overall positive impact* (60% and 54%) compared with the older age groups (49% and 47%).

Figure 40 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 (Q8) – by age group
Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (565); 45-64 (635); 65+ (619)

Impact on service provision	Overall	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+
Overall positive	50%	60%	54%	49%	47%
No impact	14%	26%	16%	11%	13%
Overall negative	31%	8%	28%	36%	34%
Don't know	4%	6%	2%	5%	5%

As can be seen in *Figure 41*, those living in Wirral West were more likely to think *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision (43%) than those in other areas (20% to 29%) and they were less likely to think it would have an *overall positive impact* (40%).

Figure 41 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 (Q8) – by constituency area
Base: Birkenhead (392); Wallasey (450); Wirral South (448); Wirral West (441)

Impact on service provision	Overall	Birkenhead	Wallasey	Wirral South	Wirral West
Overall positive	50%	60%	57%	56%	40%
No impact	14%	16%	18%	12%	11%
Overall negative	31%	20%	21%	29%	43%
Don't know	4%	4%	3%	4%	6%

Those in areas of middle and lower deprivation were more likely to say that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* (31% and 37%) than those in areas of higher deprivation (19%), as shown in *Figure 42*.

Figure 42 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 (Q8) – by deprivation levels
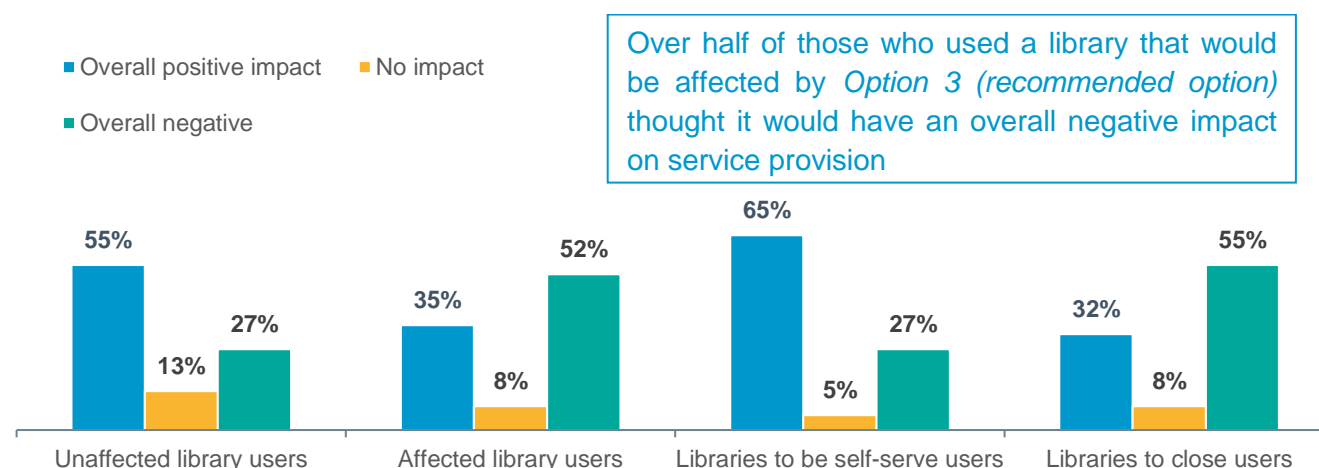*Base: Areas of higher deprivation (677); areas of middle deprivation (594); areas of lower deprivation (463)*

Impact on service provision	Overall	Areas of higher deprivation	Areas of middle deprivation	Areas of lower deprivation
Overall positive	50%	62%	49%	46%
No impact	14%	16%	15%	12%
Overall negative	31%	19%	31%	37%
Don't know	4%	3%	5%	5%

As shown in *Figure 43*, those who use a library that is affected by *Option 3 (recommended option)* or that will close were more likely to say that the option would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision than an *overall positive impact* (52% and 55% compared with 35% and 32%). The opposite was true in regard to those who use a library that would become a self-serve site, which saw larger proportions saying it would have an *overall positive impact* than *overall negative* (65% compared with 27%). This was similar for those who used a library that would be unaffected by the option (55% compared with 27%).

Figure 43 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 overall (Q8) – by library type usage
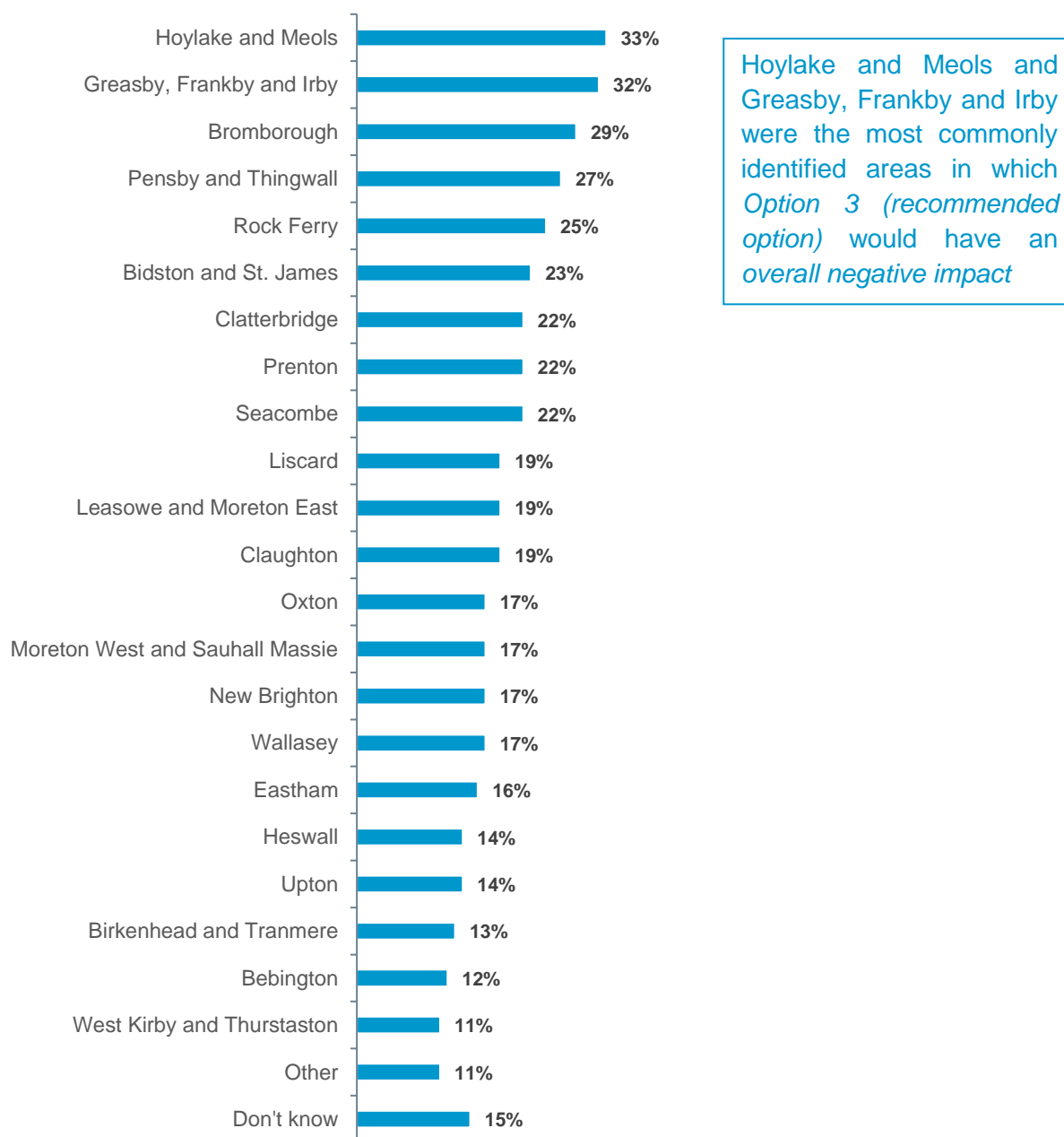*Base: Users of unaffected libraries (1,013); users of affected libraries (609); users of self-serve libraries (63); users of libraries that would close (546)*

Over half of those who used a library that would be affected by *Option 3 (recommended option)* thought it would have an overall negative impact on service provision

Survey respondents who thought that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* were asked to identify the areas of the borough in which they thought the option would have a negative impact.

As shown in *Figure 44*, Hoylake and Meols was the most commonly identified area (33%), closely followed by Greasby, Frankby and Irby (32%). Bromborough (29%), Pensby and Thingwall (27%) and Rock Ferry (25%) concluded the most common five areas.

Figure 44 – For which areas of the borough will Option 3 (recommended option) have a negative impact? (Q9)
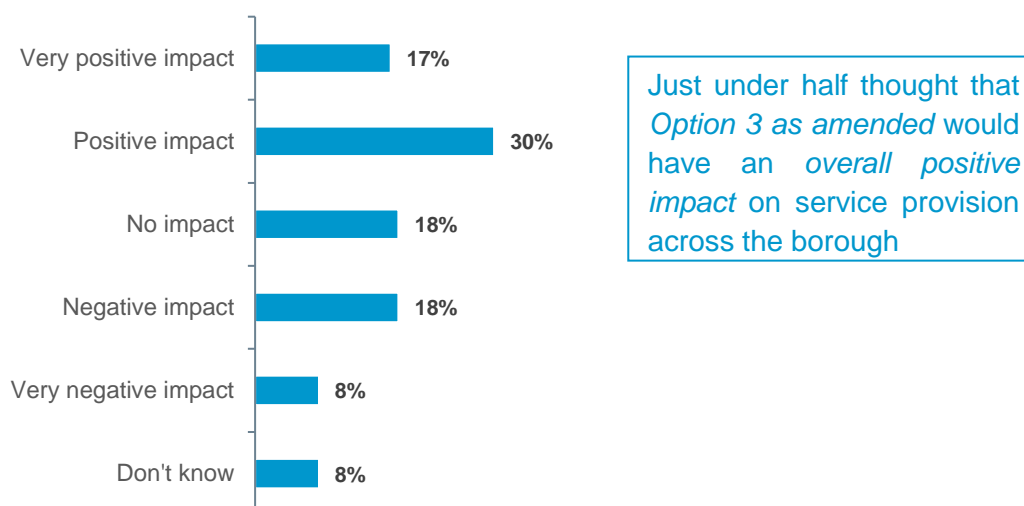*Base: Those who thought Option 3 (recommended option) would have a negative impact on service provision (621)*

Area	%
Hoylake and Meols	33%
Greasby, Frankby and Irby	32%
Bromborough	29%
Pensby and Thingwall	27%
Rock Ferry	25%
Bidston and St. James	23%
Clatterbridge	22%
Prenton	22%
Seacombe	22%
Liscard	19%
Leasowe and Moreton East	19%
Claughton	19%
Oxton	17%
Moreton West and Sauhall Massie	17%
New Brighton	17%
Wallasey	17%
Eastham	16%
Heswall	14%
Upton	14%
Birkenhead and Tranmere	13%
Bebington	12%
West Kirby and Thurstaston	11%
Other	11%
Don't know	15%

> Hoylake and Meols and Greasby, Frankby and Irby were the most commonly identified areas in which *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact*

Amongst those who selected 'other' the most common responses were 'areas that are losing libraries or that will have reduced service provision' and 'all areas'. Also mentioned were Woodchurch, New Ferry, Acre Lane area, Barnston, Beechwood, Higher Bebington, Irby, Port Sunlight, Wallasey Village, and 'rural areas'.

Respondents who thought that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* were asked to explain their response by providing comments. As shown in *Figure 45*, the most common themes were that the option was negative for areas losing a library (25%) and that libraries are important to communities or as social hubs (24%). A further 15% highlighted that libraries are important to children or for education (15%) and 14% suggested any reduction in the service is negative or that libraries should not be closed.

Figure 45 – In a few words, please explain your answer to Q9 below (Q9)
Base: Those who thought Option 3 (recommended option) would have a negative impact on service provision and provided a response (436)

Theme	%
Negative for areas losing a library	25%
Libraries are important to communities/social hubs	24%
Libraries are important to children/for education	15%
Any reduction is negative/don't close libraries	14%
I/others will not be able to access a library	13%
My local/preferred library will close	12%
Libraries should be local/in walking distance	12%
Libraries vital for low income/disadvantaged	10%
Libraries are important to the elderly	8%
Difficult for non-drivers/lack of public transport	7%
Amend the options/keep another library open	7%
Libraries improve mental health/wellbeing	7%
Close more libraries/save more money	5%
Everyone/all areas should have equal access to libraries	4%
Difficult for disabled/less mobile people to travel	3%
Libraries provide access to internet/computers	2%
Promote/encourage greater use of libraries	2%
Not everyone can/wants to access services online	2%
Questions not numbered/no Q9	2%
Dislike idea of self-serve/unstaffed libraries	2%
Improve libraries/invest more/modernise	2%
Community-run libraries/use volunteers	1%
Save money elsewhere/stop wasting money	1%
Dislike idea of mobile libraries	1%
Council has responsibility/duty to provide libraries	1%
Amended option 3 preferred/least negative	1%
Complaint about consultation	1%
Complaint about the council	1%

Option 3 as amended

As shown in *Figure 46*, 17% thought that *Option 3 as amended* would have a *very positive impact* on service provision and 30% a *positive impact*, resulting in 47% thinking it would have an *overall positive impact*. Just under a fifth (18%) thought it would have a *negative impact* and 8% a *very negative impact*, giving 27% who thought it would have an *overall negative impact*. A further 18% thought that *Option 3 as amended* would have *no impact*.

Figure 46 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 as amended (Q8)
Base: All respondents (1,989)

> Just under half thought that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall positive impact* on service provision across the borough

As seen with the previous option, self-completion survey respondents were more likely to think that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision than those in the interviewer led survey (38% compared with 13%). This is shown in *Figure 47*.

Figure 47 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 as amended (Q8) – by survey type
Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,089); interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Impact on service provision	Overall	Self-completion survey	Interviewer led survey
Overall positive	47%	37%	59%
No impact	18%	13%	24%
Overall negative	27%	38%	13%
Don't know	8%	12%	4%

Library users were more likely to think that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* than non-users (31% compared with 8%) and less likely to think it would have an *overall positive impact* (45% compared with 56%). This is shown in *Figure 48*.

Figure 48 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 as amended (Q8) – by library usage
Base: Library users (1,606); non-users (381)

Impact on service provision	Overall	Users	Non-users
Overall positive	47%	45%	56%
No impact	18%	15%	31%
Overall negative	27%	31%	8%
Don't know	8%	9%	5%

As shown in *Figure 49*, those in the youngest age group were less likely than other age groups to think that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision across the borough (6% compared with 25% to 31%). The youngest age group was also more likely than other age groups to think that *Option 3 as amended* would have *no impact* on service provision (35% compared with 14% to 20%).

Figure 49 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 as amended (Q8) – by age group
Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (563); 45-64 (631); 65+ (609)

Impact on service provision	Overall	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+
Overall positive	47%	53%	48%	46%	47%
No impact	18%	35%	20%	14%	16%
Overall negative	27%	6%	25%	31%	28%
Don't know	8%	7%	7%	9%	9%

Those living in Wirral South and Wirral West were more likely to think *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* on service provision (27% and 33% respectively) than those in Birkenhead (16%) and Wallasey (20%). Those living in Birkenhead were more likely to think it would have an *overall positive impact* than those in other areas (58% compared with 44% to 48%), whilst those living in Wallasey were more likely to think the option would have *no impact* than other areas (26% compared with 15% to 18%). This is shown in *Figure 50.*

Figure 50 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 (Q8) – by constituency area
Base: Birkenhead (391); Wallasey (447); Wirral South (442); Wirral West (439)

Impact on service provision	Overall	Birkenhead	Wallasey	Wirral South	Wirral West
Overall positive	47%	58%	48%	48%	44%
No impact	18%	18%	26%	15%	15%
Overall negative	27%	16%	20%	27%	33%
Don't know	8%	8%	7%	10%	8%

As can be seen in *Figure 51*, those living in areas of higher deprivation were more likely to think that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall positive impact* (54%) than those living in areas of middle and lower deprivation (47% and 46%) and were less likely to think it would have an *overall negative impact* (17% compared with 28% and 29%).

Figure 51 – What impact, if any, will each option have on service provision across the borough? – Option 3 as amended (Q8) – by deprivation levels
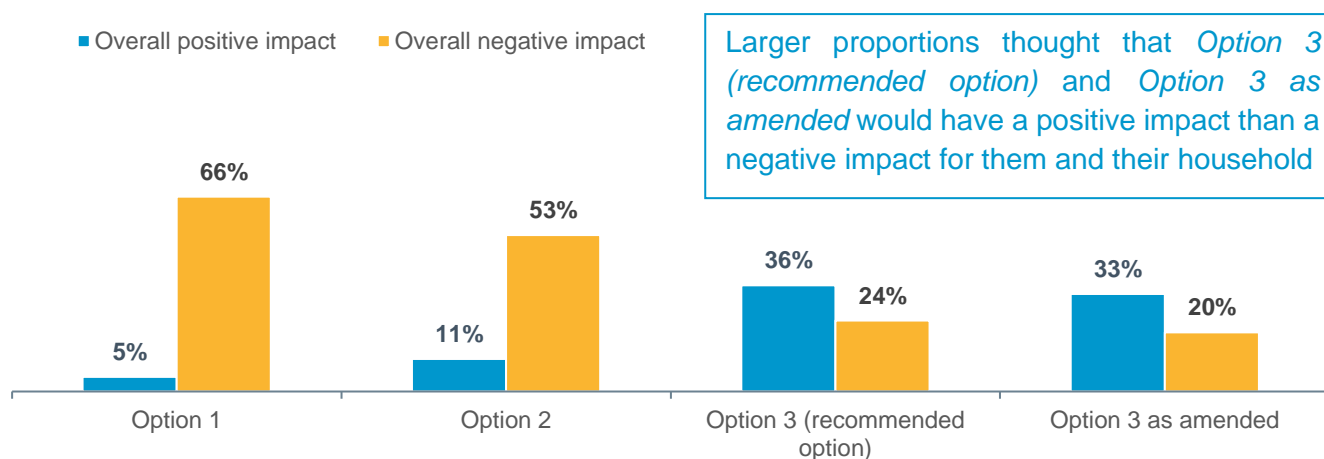*Base: Areas of higher deprivation (670); areas of middle deprivation (589); areas of lower deprivation (462)*

Impact on service provision	Overall	Areas of higher deprivation	Areas of middle deprivation	Areas of lower deprivation
Overall positive	47%	54%	47%	46%
No impact	18%	21%	17%	17%
Overall negative	27%	17%	28%	29%
Don't know	8%	9%	8%	8%

2.4   Impact of options for households

Survey respondents were then asked what impact they thought each option would have for them and their household. Again, respondents were able to choose from a scale from *very positive impact* to *very negative impact* and were also able to choose *no impact* or *don't know*.

As can be seen in *Figure 52*, a larger proportion thought that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household than an *overall positive impact* (66% compared with 5%). Likewise, a larger proportion thought that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household than an *overall positive impact* (53% compared with 11%). For *Option 3 (recommended option)* however, a larger proportion thought it would have an *overall positive impact* than an *overall negative impact* (36% compared with 24%). A larger proportion also thought that *Option 3 as amended* would have an overall positive impact (33%) than overall negative impact (20%). The proportions who thought that *Option 3 (recommended option)* and *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall positive impact* were similar (36% and 33%).

Figure 52 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? (Q10)
Base: All respondents (2,003)

Option 1

As shown in *Figure 53*, 46% thought that *Option 1* would have a *very negative* impact on them and their household, which was the most common response. A further 19% thought the impact would be *negative*, resulting in 66% thinking that the option would have an *overall negative impact*. A further quarter thought that *Option 1* would have *no impact* (26%). Only small proportions thought that *Option 1* would have a *very positive impact* (2%) or a *positive impact* (3%).
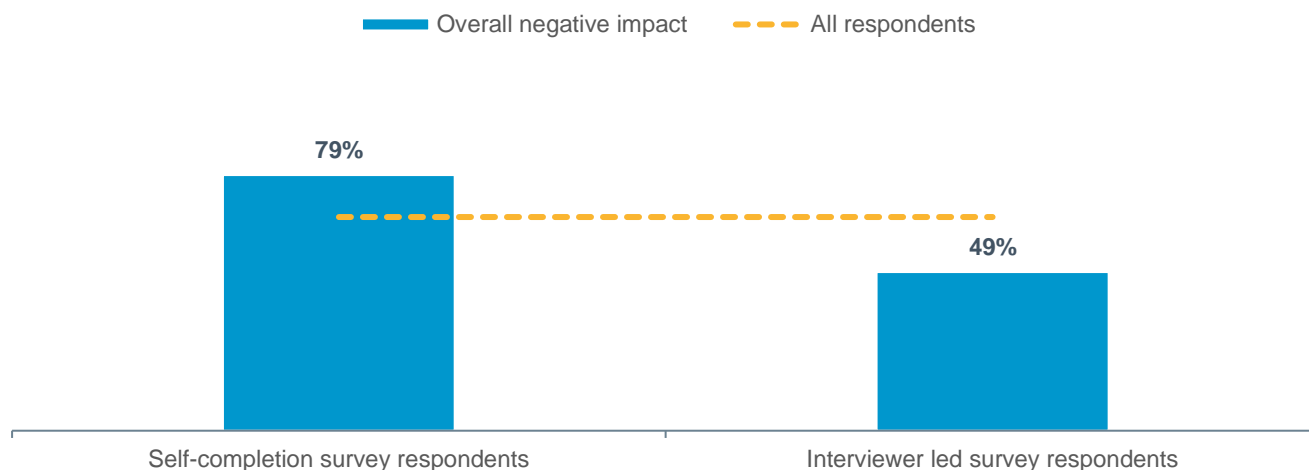
Figure 53 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 1 (Q10)
Base: All respondents (1,991)

As can be seen in *Figure 54*, self-completion survey respondents were more likely to think that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* than respondents in the interviewer led survey (79% compared with 49%).

Figure 54 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 1 overall negative impact (Q10) – by survey type
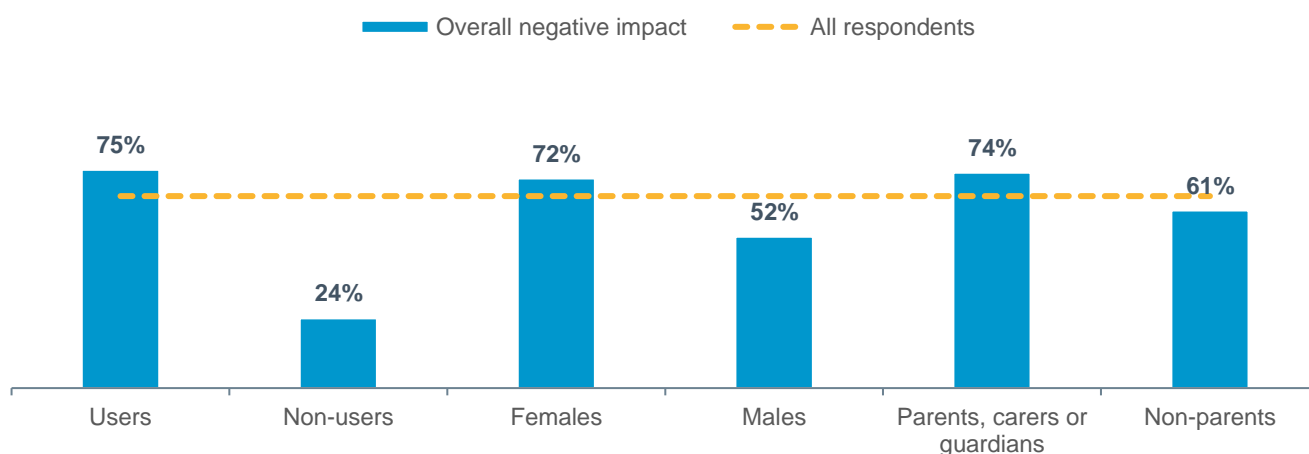*Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,091); interviewer led survey respondents (900)*

Figure 55 shows subgroup differences. Users were more likely than non-users to think that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* (75% compared with 24%), as were females compared with males (72% compared with 52%). Parents, carers and guardians were also more likely to think the option would have an *overall negative impact* for them than those who were not a parent, carer or guardian (74% compared with 61%).

Figure 55 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 1 overall negative impact (Q10) – by library usage, gender and parental status
Base: Users (1,608); non-users (381); females (1,250); males (669); parents, carers or guardians (611); non-parents (1,308)

Those in the youngest age group (16-24) were less likely to think that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household (27%) than other age groups (67% to 69%). This is shown in *Figure 56*.

Figure 56 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 1 overall negative impact (Q10) – by age group
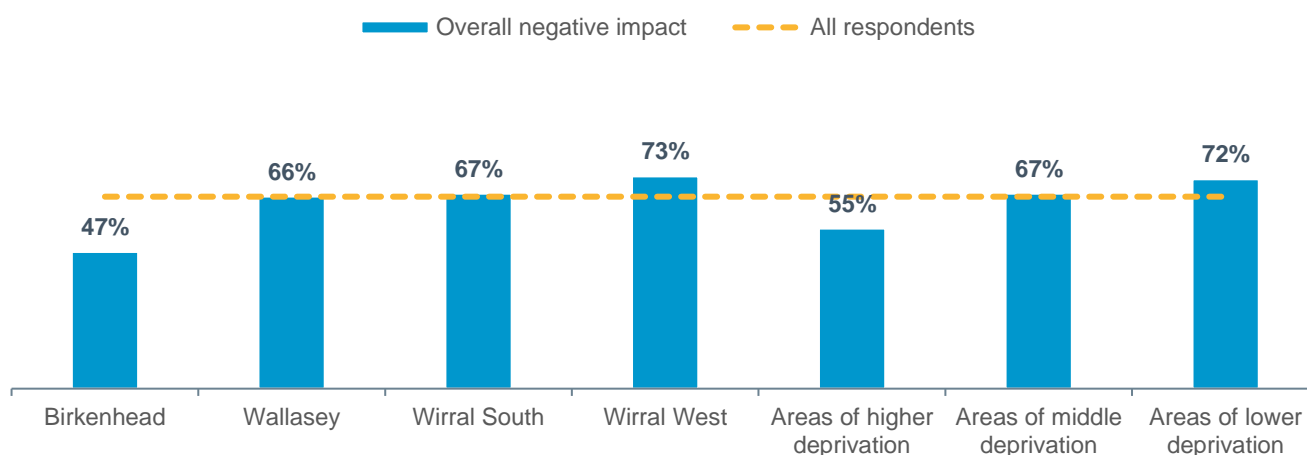*Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (562); 45-64 (631); 65+ (611)*

As shown in *Figure 57*, those living in Birkenhead were less likely to think that *Option 1* would have an *overall negative impact* (47%) than those living in other areas (66% to 73%). Those living in areas of higher deprivation were also less likely to think that the option would have an *overall negative impact* (55%) than those living in areas of middle and lower deprivation (67% and 72%).

Figure 57 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 1 overall negative impact (Q10) – by constituency area and deprivation levels
Base: Birkenhead (391); Wallasey (448); Wirral South (443); Wirral West (441); areas of higher deprivation (673); areas of middle deprivation (590); areas of lower deprivation (462)
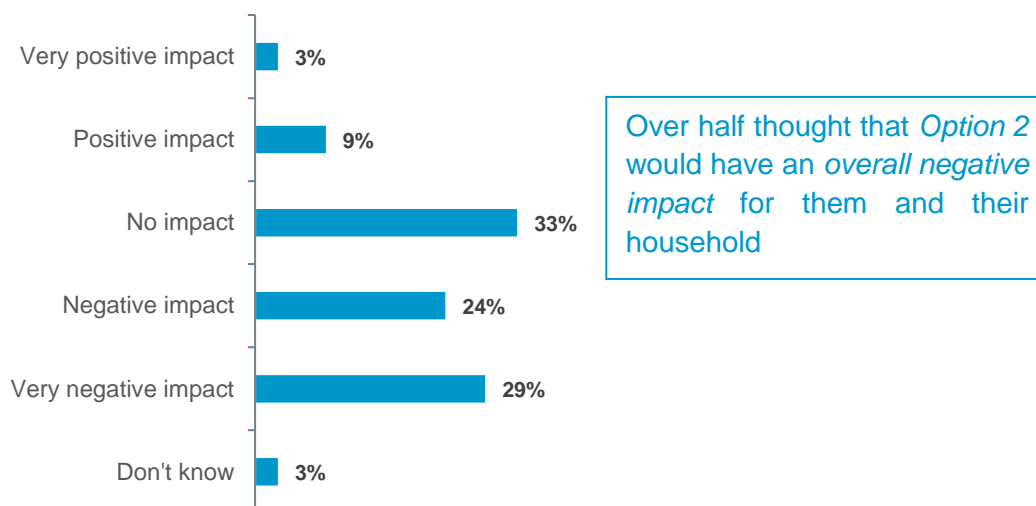
Option 2

As can be seen in *Figure 58*, a third thought that *Option 2* would have *no impact* for them and their household (33%), which was the most common response. Three in ten said it would have a *very negative impact* (29%) and 24% said it would have a *negative impact*, resulting in 53% who thought it would have an *overall negative impact*. Smaller proportions thought that *Option 2* would have a *very positive impact* (3%) or a *positive impact* (9%).

Figure 58 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 2 (Q10)
Base: All respondents (1,988)

> Over half thought that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household

By survey type, self-completion survey respondents were more likely to think that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* than respondents in the interviewer led survey (68% compared with 34%). This is shown in *Figure 59*.

Figure 59 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 2 overall negative impact (Q10) – by survey type
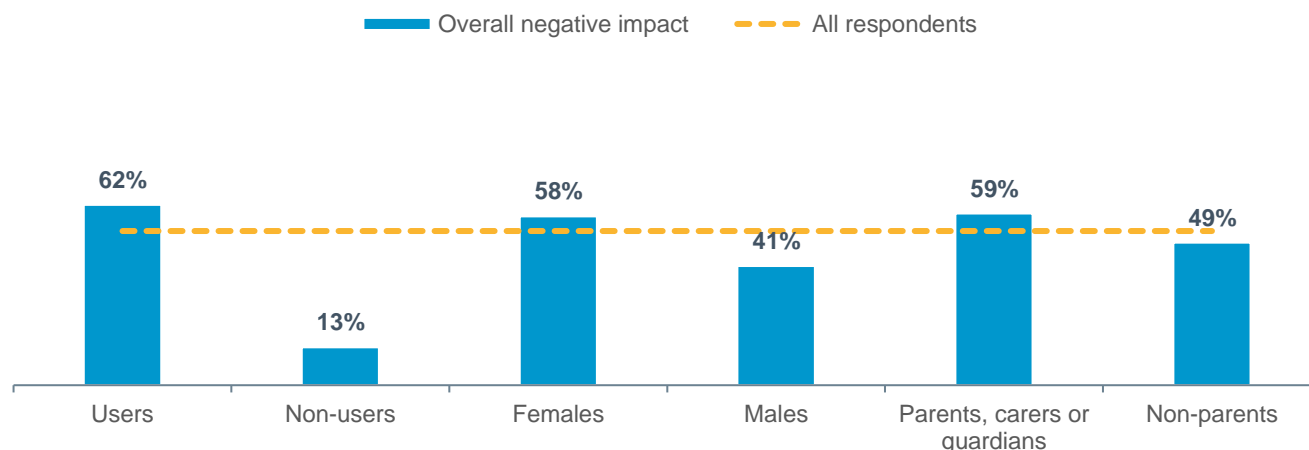*Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,088); interviewer led survey respondents (900)*

Subgroup analysis highlights that users were more likely than non-users to think that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* (62% compared with 13%). Females were also more likely than males to say that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household (58% compared with 41%), as were parents, carers or guardians compared with those who were not (59% compared with 49%). This is shown in *Figure 60*.

Figure 60 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 2 overall negative impact (Q10) – by library usage, gender and parental status
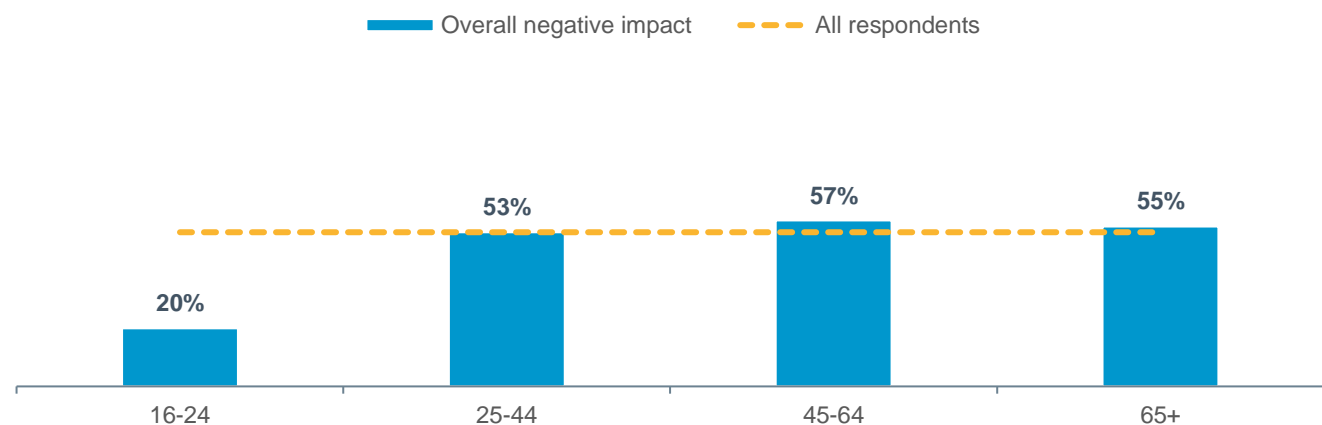*Base: Users (1,605); non-users (381); females (1,249); males (667); parents, carers or guardians (610); non-parents (1,304)*

Again, those in the youngest age group (16-24) were less likely to think that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household (20%) than other age groups (53% to 57%). This is shown in *Figure 61*.

Figure 61 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 2 overall negative impact (Q10) – by age group
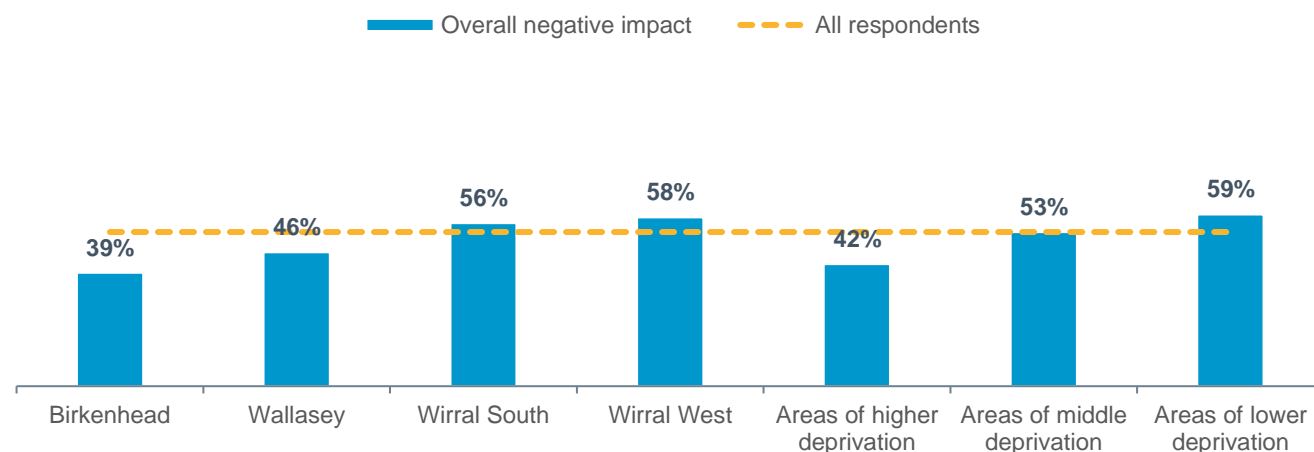*Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (563); 45-64 (631); 65+ (607)*

As shown in *Figure 62*, those living in Birkenhead and Wallasey were less likely to think that *Option 2* would have an *overall negative impact* (39% and 46%) than those living in Wirral South (56%) and Wirral West (58%). Those living in areas of higher deprivation were also less likely to think that the option would have an *overall negative impact* (42%) compared with those living in areas of middle and lower deprivation (53% and 59%).

Figure 62 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 2 overall negative impact (Q10) – by constituency area and deprivation levels
Base: Birkenhead (391); Wallasey (448); Wirral South (441); Wirral West (439); areas of higher deprivation (673); areas of middle deprivation (589); areas of lower deprivation (459)
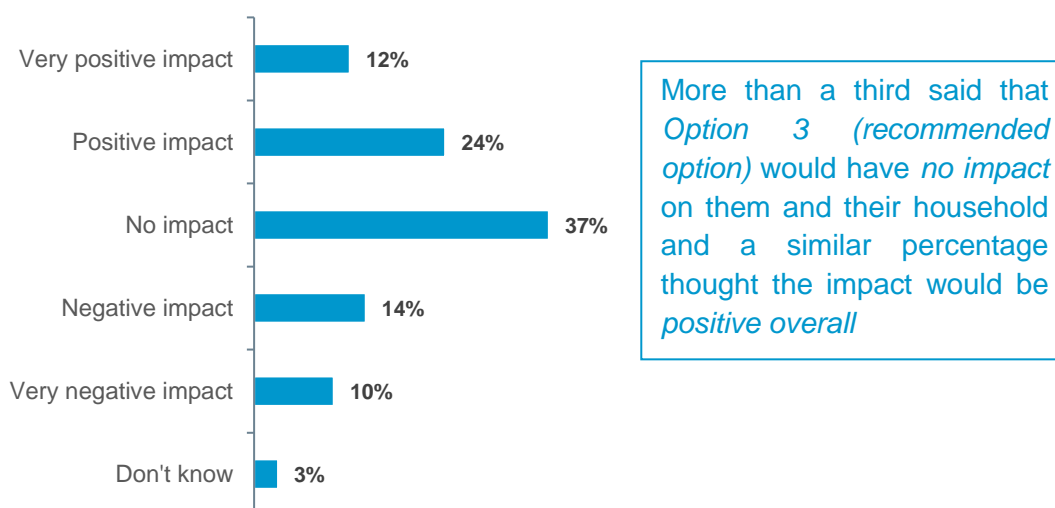

Option 3 (recommended option)

As shown in *Figure 63*, 37% said that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have *no impact* for them and their household, which was the most common response. A further 12% said it would have a *very positive impact* and 24% a *positive impact*, which gave 36% saying it would have an *overall positive impact*. By contrast, 24% said it would have an *overall negative impact* (14% *negative impact* and 10% *very negative impact*).

Figure 63 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 (Q10)
Base: All respondents (2,003)

More than a third said that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have *no impact* on them and their household and a similar percentage thought the impact would be *positive overall*

As shown in *Figure 64*, self-completion survey respondents were more likely to say that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household than interviewer led survey respondents (37% compared with 8%), whereas the latter were more likely to say that it would have *no impact* for them (54% compared with 24%).

Figure 64 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 (Q10) – by survey type
Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,103); interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Impact for household	Overall	Self-completion survey	Interviewer led survey
Overall positive	36%	35%	37%
No impact	37%	24%	54%
Overall negative	24%	37%	8%
Don't know	3%	4%	1%

As can be seen in *Figure 65*, library users were more likely to think that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* than non-users (29% compared with 3%) and an *overall positive impact* (39% compared with 21%). Non-users on the other hand were much more likely to say it would have *no impact* for them (75% compared with 28%).

Figure 65 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 (Q10) – by library usage
Base: Library users (1,619); non-users (381)

Impact for household	Overall	Users	Non-users
Overall positive	36%	39%	21%
No impact	37%	28%	75%
Overall negative	24%	29%	3%
Don't know	3%	3%	1%

Figure 67 shows differences by gender. As can be seen, females were more likely than males to say that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* (26% compared with 18%) and an *overall positive impact* (40% compared with 30%). Males, on the other hand, were more likely to say it would have *no impact* for them (50% compared with 31%).

Figure 66 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 (Q10) – by gender
Base: Females (1,256); males (674)

Impact for household	Overall	Females	Males
Overall positive	36%	40%	30%
No impact	37%	31%	50%
Overall negative	24%	26%	18%
Don't know	3%	3%	2%

Those in the youngest age group were more likely to say that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have *no impact* for them and their household (63%) than older age groups (34% to 37%), as shown in *Figure 67*.

Figure 67 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 (Q10) – by age group
Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (564); 45-64 (634); 65+ (617)

Impact for household	Overall	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+
Overall positive	36%	30%	39%	36%	35%
No impact	37%	63%	37%	35%	34%
Overall negative	24%	6%	22%	26%	28%
Don't know	3%	1%	3%	3%	3%

As can be seen in *Figure 68*, those living in Wirral West were more likely to think *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household (35%) than those in other areas (15% to 18%) and they were less likely to think it would have an *overall positive impact* (29%).

Figure 68 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 (Q10) – by constituency area
Base: Birkenhead (392); Wallasey (451); Wirral South (445); Wirral West (441)

Impact for household	Overall	Birkenhead	Wallasey	Wirral South	Wirral West
Overall positive	36%	38%	39%	41%	29%
No impact	37%	45%	41%	39%	34%
Overall negative	24%	15%	17%	18%	35%
Don't know	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%

As shown in *Figure 69*, those in areas of middle and lower deprivation were more likely to say that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* (23% and 29%) than those in areas of higher deprivation (14%). Those in areas of higher and middle deprivation were more likely to say that there would be no impact for them (44% and 40%) than those who lived in areas of lower deprivation (33%).

Figure 69 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 (Q10) – by deprivation levels
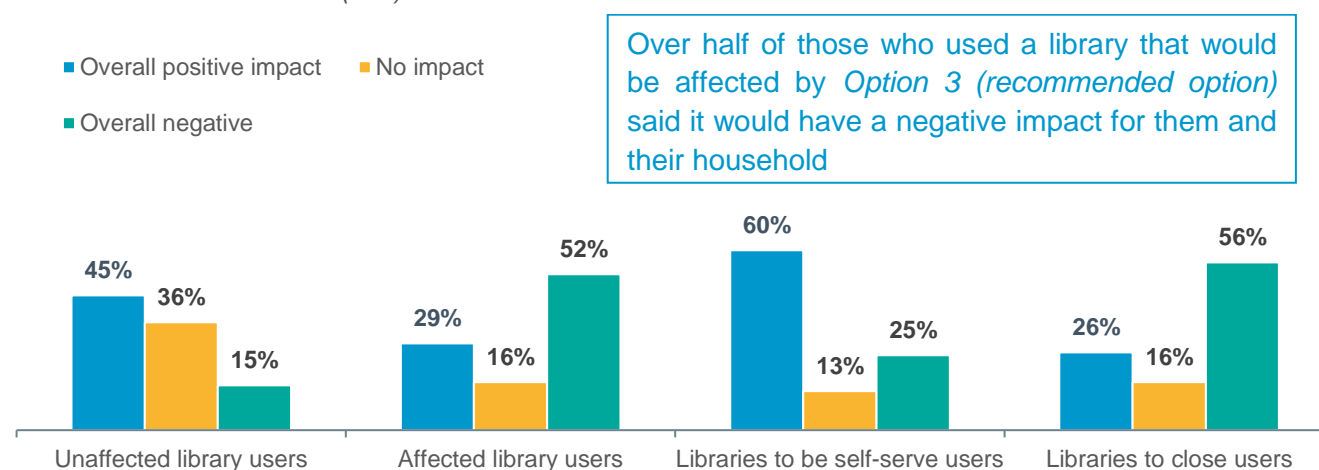*Base: Areas of higher deprivation (677); areas of middle deprivation (591); areas of lower deprivation (464)*

Impact for household	Overall	Areas of higher deprivation	Areas of middle deprivation	Areas of lower deprivation
Overall positive	36%	40%	33%	36%
No impact	37%	44%	40%	33%
Overall negative	24%	14%	23%	29%
Don't know	3%	2%	3%	2%

As shown in *Figure 70*, those who use a library that is affected by *Option 3 (recommended option)* or that will close were more likely to say that the option would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household than an *overall positive impact* (52% compared with 29% and 56% compared with 26%). As seen with Q8, the opposite was seen in regard to those who use a library that would become a self-serve site, which saw a larger proportion saying it would have an *overall positive impact* than *overall negative* (60% compared with 25%) and the same was true for those who used a library that would be unaffected by the option (45% compared with 15%).

Figure 70 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 (Q10) – by library type usage
Base: Users of unaffected libraries (1,011); users of affected libraries (608); users of self-serve libraries (63); users of libraries that would close (545)

Survey respondents who thought that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* or an *overall positive impact* were asked to explain the impact by providing comments. As shown in *Figure 71*, the most common theme was that libraries are important to communities or as social hubs (20%), closely followed by that *Option 3 (recommended option)* was the best option, gave the most coverage or kept more libraries open than other options (19%), and that libraries are important to children or for education (18%).

Figure 71 – If you think Option 3 (recommended option) will have a positive or negative impact, please explain below (Q10)
Base: Those who thought Option 3 (recommended option) would have a positive or negative impact their household and provided an answer (903)
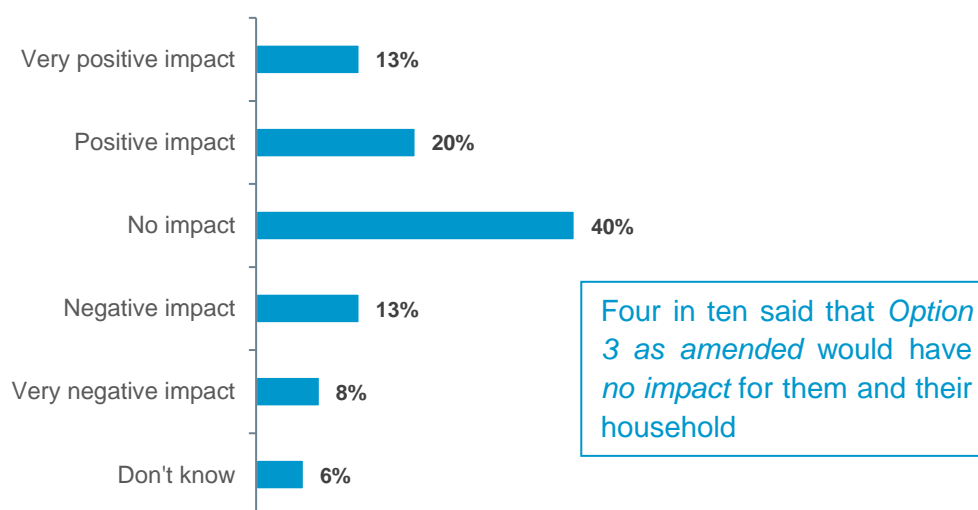
Theme	%
Libraries are important to communities/social hubs	20%
Best option/most coverage/keeps more libraries	19%
Libraries are important to children/for education	18%
Any reduction is negative/don't close libraries	13%
My local/preferred library will remain open	12%
Libraries should be local/in walking distance	12%
My local/preferred library will close	11%
Negative for areas losing a library	7%
Libraries vital for low income/disadvantaged	6%
I/others will not be able to access a library	6%
Libraries are important to the elderly	5%
Difficult for non-drivers/lack of public transport	4%
Libraries improve mental health/wellbeing	4%
Everyone/all areas should have equal access to libraries	3%
Amend the options/keep another library open	3%
Libraries provide access to internet/computers	3%
Need to save money	2%

Theme	%
Best option offered but still negative	2%
Difficult for disabled/less mobile people to travel	2%
Prefer one of the other options	2%
Not everyone can/wants to access services online	2%
Library staff are important/save jobs	1%
Community-run libraries/use volunteers	1%
Dislike idea of mobile libraries	1%
Save money elsewhere/stop wasting money	0%
Maintain public services	0%
Council has responsibility/duty to provide libraries	0%
Question/more information needed	0%
Complaint about the council	0%

Option 3 as amended

As shown in *Figure 72*, the most common response was that *Option 3 as amended* would have *no impact* for households (40%). For 13% the option would have a *very positive impact* for them and their household and 20% said it would have a *positive impact*, resulting in 33% thinking it would have an *overall positive impact*. One in five thought the impact would *be negative overall* (20%), with 13% thinking it would be *negative* and 8% *very negative*.

Figure 72 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 as amended (Q10)
Base: All respondents (1,992)

Very positive impact 13%
Positive impact 20%
No impact 40%
Negative impact 13%
Very negative impact 8%
Don't know 6%

> Four in ten said that *Option 3 as amended* would have *no impact* for them and their household

As seen with the previous option, self-completion survey respondents were more likely to think that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household than those in the interviewer led survey (30% compared with 8%), whereas those in the interviewer led survey were more likely to say it would have *no impact* for them (56% compared with 27%). This is shown in *Figure 73*.

Figure 73 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 as amended (Q10) – by survey type
Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,092); interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Impact for households	Overall	Self-completion survey	Interviewer led survey
Overall positive	33%	32%	34%
No impact	40%	27%	56%
Overall negative	20%	30%	8%
Don't know	6%	10%	2%

Library users were more likely to say that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* than non-users (25% compared with 2%) and also were more likely to say it would have an *overall positive impact* (36% compared with 19%). Those in the interviewer led survey were more likely to say it would have *no impact* (77% compared with 32%). This is shown in *Figure 74*.

Figure 74 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 as amended (Q10) – by library usage
Base: Library users (1,609); non-users (381)

Impact for households	Overall	Users	Non-users
Overall positive	33%	36%	19%
No impact	40%	32%	77%
Overall negative	20%	25%	2%
Don't know	6%	7%	2%

As shown in *Figure 75*, females were more likely than males to say that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* (22% compared with 16%) and were also more likely to indicate it would have an *overall positive impact* (37% compared with 28%). Males, on the other hand, were more likely to say it would have *no impact* (52% compared with 35%).

Figure 75 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 as amended (Q10) – by gender
Base: Females (1,252); males (669)

Impact for households	Overall	Females	Males
Overall positive	33%	37%	28%
No impact	40%	35%	52%
Overall negative	20%	22%	16%
Don't know	6%	7%	5%

Analysis by age group highlights that those in the youngest age group were less likely than other age groups to say that *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household (5% compared with 19% to 23%). The youngest age group was more likely than other age groups to think that *Option 3 as amended* would have *no impact* for them (67% compared with 37% to 41%). This is shown in *Figure 76*.

Figure 76 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 as amended (Q10) – by age group
Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (562); 45-64 (629); 65+ (614)

Impact for households	Overall	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+
Overall positive	33%	24%	34%	33%	35%
No impact	40%	67%	41%	37%	37%
Overall negative	20%	5%	19%	23%	22%
Don't know	6%	4%	6%	7%	6%

As shown in *Figure 77*, those living in Wirral West were more likely to think *Option 3 as amended* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household (27%) than those in other areas (11% to 18%).

Figure 77 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 (Q10) – by constituency area
Base: Birkenhead (391); Wallasey (448); Wirral South (445); Wirral West (440)

Impact for households	Overall	Birkenhead	Wallasey	Wirral South	Wirral West
Overall positive	33%	37%	31%	33%	33%
No impact	40%	47%	47%	42%	35%
Overall negative	20%	11%	17%	18%	27%
Don't know	6%	6%	5%	7%	5%

As can be seen in *Figure 78*, those living in areas of higher and middle deprivation were more likely to think that *Option 3 as amended* would have *no impact* for them and their household (47% and 42%) than those living in areas of lower deprivation (37%) and those in areas of higher deprivation were less likely to think it would have an *overall negative impact* (12%) than those in other areas (21% and 22%).

Figure 78 – What impact, if any, will each option have for you and your household? – Option 3 as amended (Q10) – by deprivation levels
Base: Areas of higher deprivation (674); areas of middle deprivation (590); areas of lower deprivation (462)
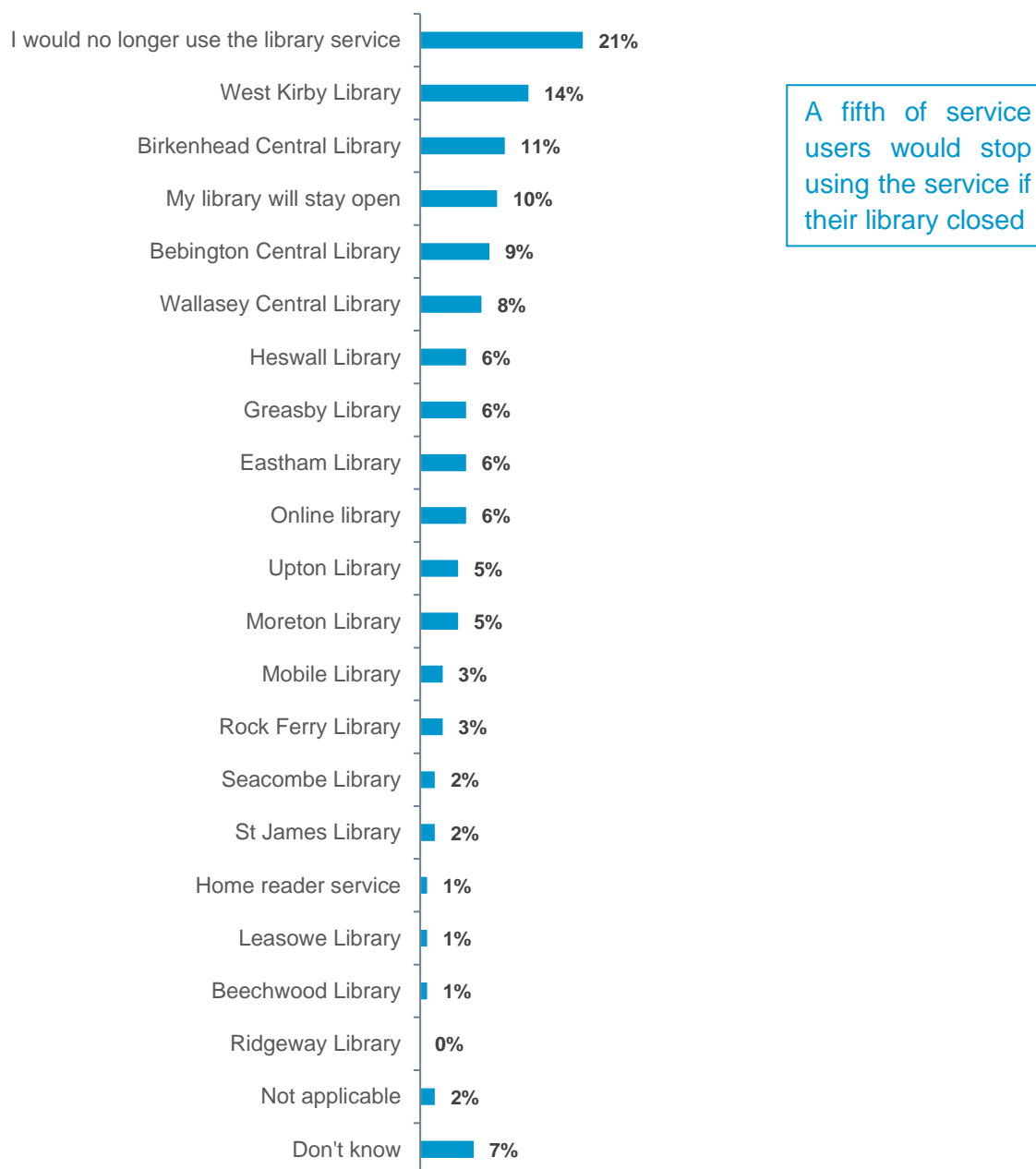
Impact for households	Overall	Areas of higher deprivation	Areas of middle deprivation	Areas of lower deprivation
Overall positive	33%	35%	31%	35%
No impact	40%	47%	42%	37%
Overall negative	20%	12%	21%	22%
Don't know	6%	7%	5%	5%

2.5   Using an alternative library service

Survey respondents were asked which remaining library under *Option 3* they would use if the library that they used most often was not open. Respondents were able to choose as many options as applied.

Amongst those who used the library service, the most common response was that they would no longer use the service (21%), as shown in *Figure 79*. The second most common response was West Kirby Library (14%), followed by Birkenhead Central Library (11%). One in ten thought their library would stay open (10%).

Figure 79 – If the library you use most often was not open, which of these, if any, would you use instead? (Q11) Base: Library users (1,635)
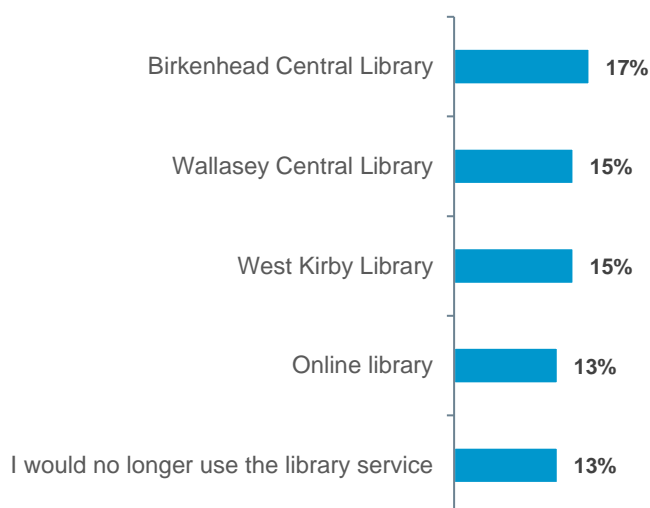

A fifth of service users would stop using the service if their library closed

As shown in *Figure 80*, the likelihood of users saying they would no longer use the service if their library was not open increased by age, with those in the youngest age group less likely to say that they would not use another service (13%) than those in the oldest age group (24%).

Figure 80 – If the library you use most often was not open, which of these, if any, would you use instead? (Q11) – would no longer use the service – by age group
Base: Users 16-24 (78); users 25-44 (457); users 45-64 (504); users 65+ (557)

Amongst those users aged 16-24, the most common response was that they would use Birkenhead Central Library (17%), closely followed by Wallasey Central Library (15%) and West Kirby Library (15%). A further 13% said they would use the online service and the same proportion (13%) said they would no longer use the service. This is shown in *Figure 81*.

Figure 81 – If the library you use most often was not open, which of these, if any, would you use instead? (Q11) – top five
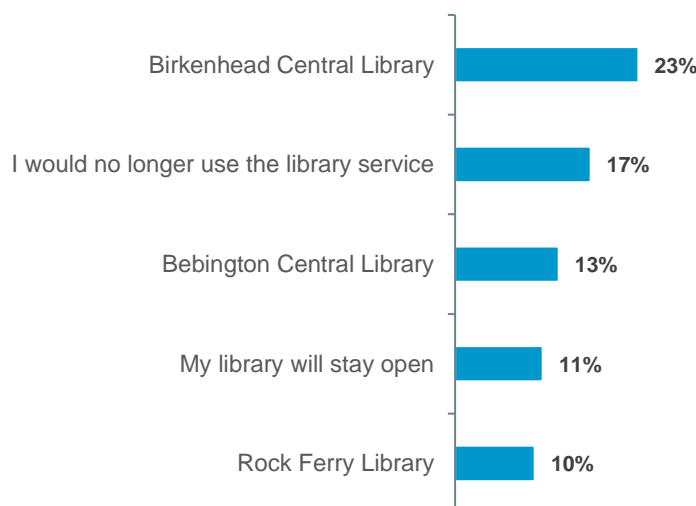*Base: Users aged 16-24 (78)*

Figure 82 shows the five most common responses amongst users living in the Birkenhead constituency area. As can be seen, users in that area most commonly identified Birkenhead Central Library as the alternative that they would use (23%), whilst 17% said they would no longer use the service. A further 13% said they would use Bebington Central Library, 11% thought that their library would stay open and 10% chose Rock Ferry Library.

Figure 82 – If the library you use most often was not open, which of these, if any, would you use instead? (Q11) – top five
Base: Users in Birkenhead constituency area (246)

Amongst users living in the Wallasey constituency area, Wallasey Central Library was the most common alternative library that would be used (27%). A further 17% said they would no longer use the library service and 12% said their library would stay open. This is shown in *Figure 83*.

Figure 83 – If the library you use most often was not open, which of these, if any, would you use instead? (Q11) – top five
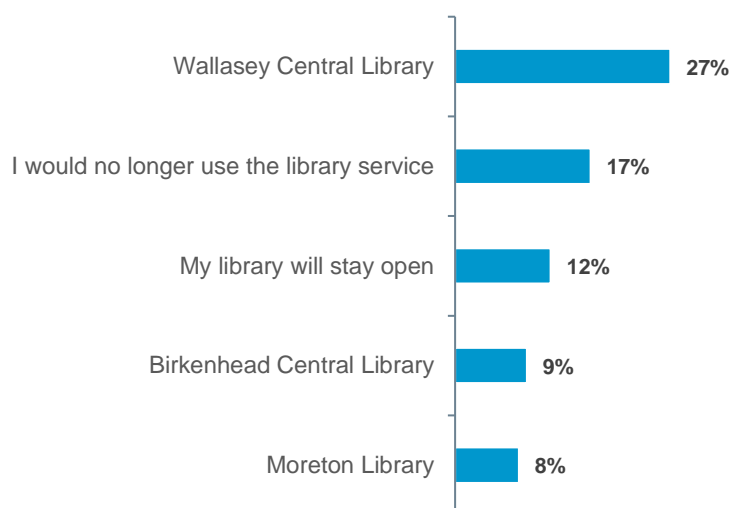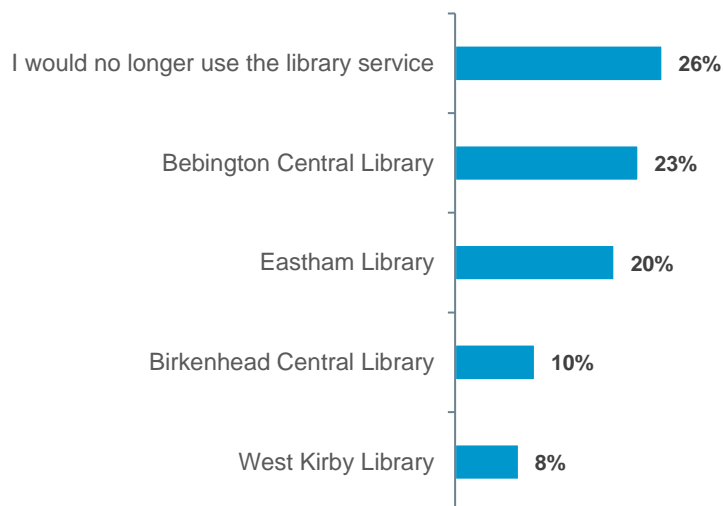*Base: Users in Wallasey constituency area (322)*

Figure 84 shows alternative libraries that would be used amongst those living in the Wirral South area. A quarter of users in that area said they would no longer use the service (26%) and a further 23% would use Bebington Central Library. A fifth would use Eastham Library (20%).

Figure 84 – If the library you use most often was not open, which of these, if any, would you use instead? (Q11) – top five
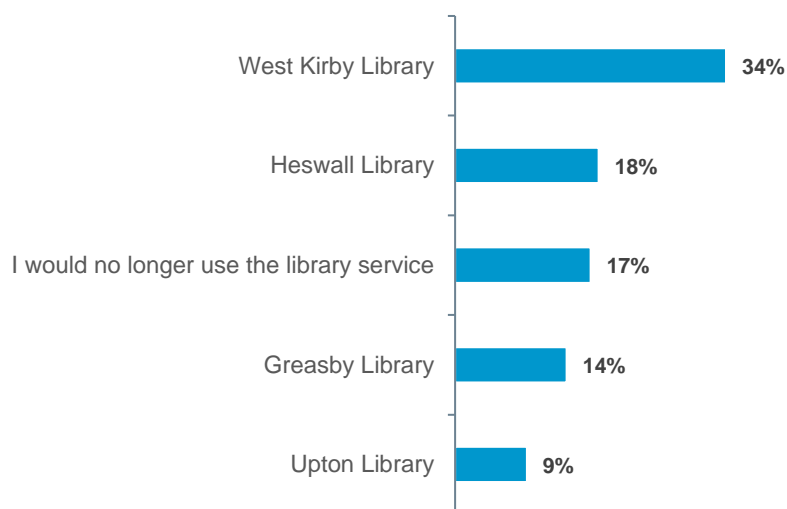*Base: Users in Wirral South constituency area (395)*

Amongst users living in Wirral West, a third said they would use West Kirby Library if their library closed (34%), which was the most common response, as shown in *Figure 85*. Just under a fifth said they would use Heswall Library (18%) and a similar proportion would no longer use the service (17%). A further 14% said they would use Greasby Library.

Figure 85 – If the library you use most often was not open, which of these, if any, would you use instead? (Q11) – top five
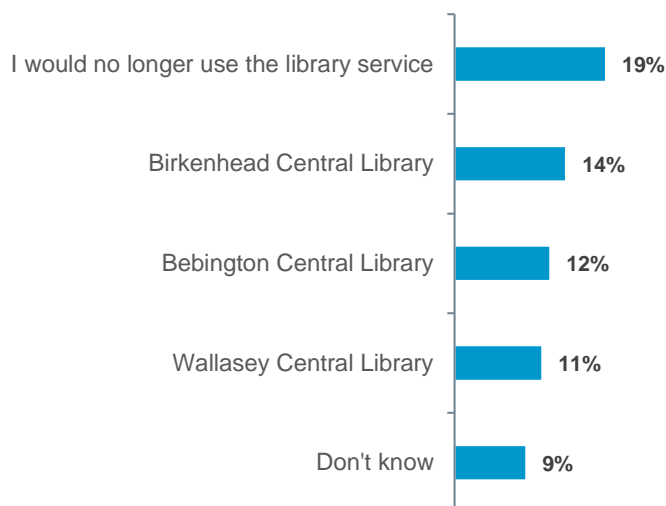*Base: Users in Wirral West constituency area (407)*

Amongst users living in areas of higher deprivation, a fifth said they would no longer use the service if their library was closed (19%), which was the most common response. A further 14% would use Birkenhead Central Library, 12% Bebington Central Library and 11% Wallasey Central Library. Around one in ten said they did not know (9%). This is shown in *Figure 86*.

Figure 86 – If the library you use most often was not open, which of these, if any, would you use instead? (Q11) – top five
Base: Users living in areas of higher deprivation (451)

As shown in *Figure 87*, amongst users of libraries that would be affected by *Option 3 (recommended option)*, the most common response was that they would stop using the service (22%), very closely followed by West Kirby Library (21%). A further 13% said they would use Wallasey Central Library, 9% Birkenhead Central Library and 9% Eastham Library.

Figure 87 – If the library you use most often was not open, which of these, if any, would you use instead? (Q11) – top five
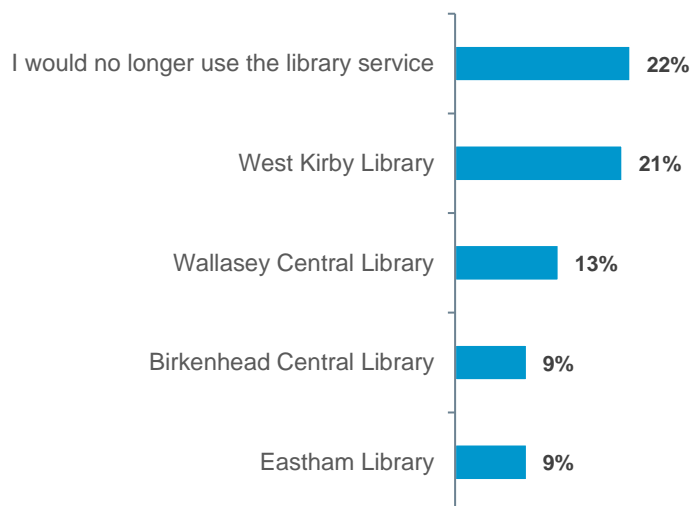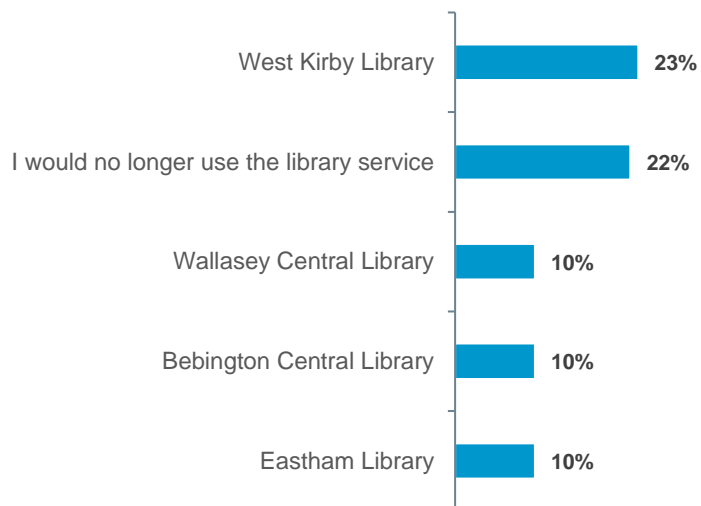*Base: Users of libraries affected by Option 3 (617)*

Figure 88 shows the alternative libraries that those who use a library that would close under *Option 3 (recommended option)* would use. As shown 23% said they would use West Kirby Library, whilst 22% would cease to use the service.

Figure 88 – If the library you use most often was not open, which of these, if any, would you use instead? (Q11) – top five
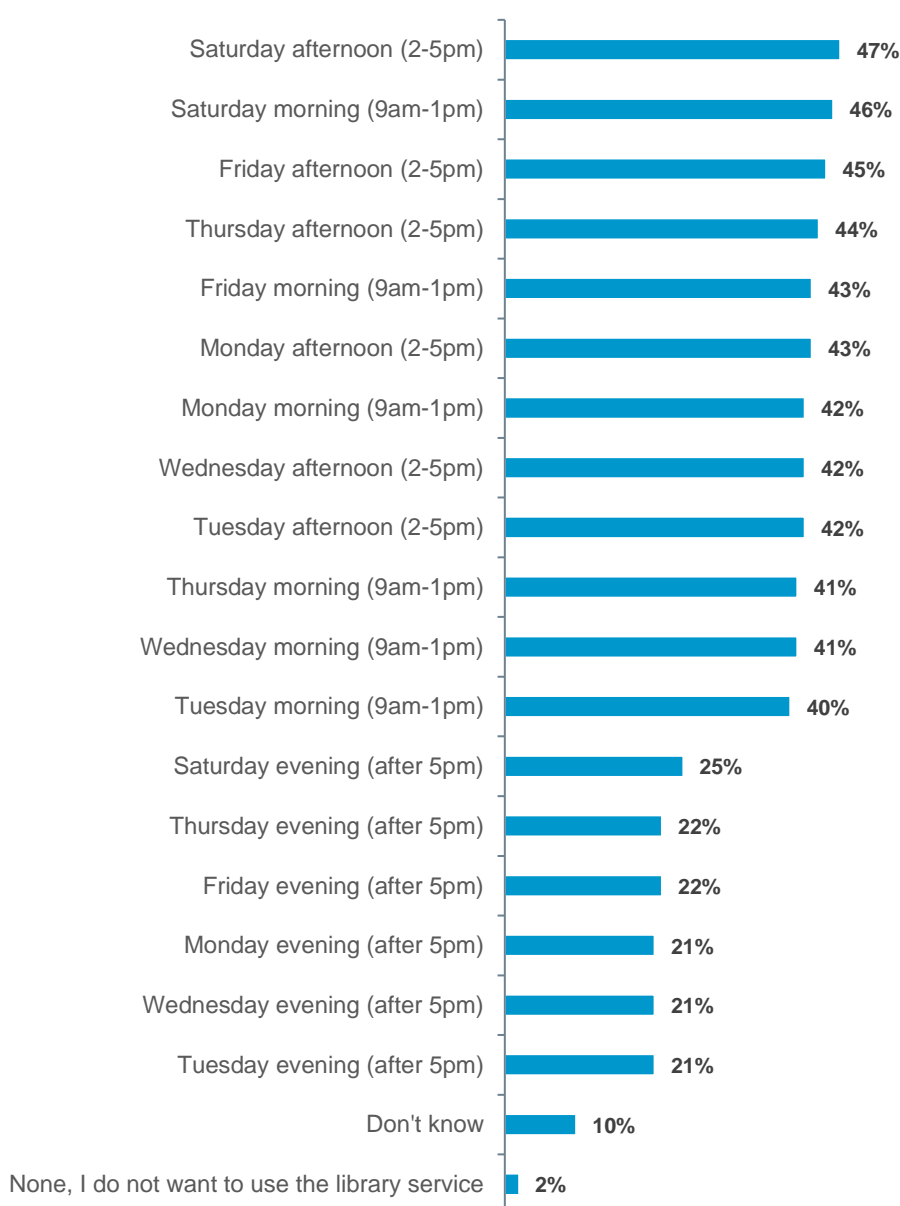Base: Users of libraries that would close under Option 3 (555)

2.6   Preferred days and times to use libraries

Survey respondents were asked which day of the week they would prefer to use a library or library service and the preferred time of day. Respondents were able to choose more than one day and more than one time of day.

Amongst library service users, all mornings and afternoons were selected by four in ten or more. Saturday afternoon between 2pm and 5pm was the most popular day and time (47%), followed very closely by Saturday morning 9am to 1pm (46%) and Friday afternoon between 2pm and 5pm (45%). Thursday afternoon between 2pm and 5pm was preferred by 44%, followed by Friday morning 9am to 1pm (43%) and Monday afternoon between 2pm and 5pm (43%). Evenings were the least popular time to use a library, with Saturday evening after 5pm the most popular evening (25%) and Tuesday evening the least popular (21%). This is shown in *Figure 89*.

Figure 89 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13)
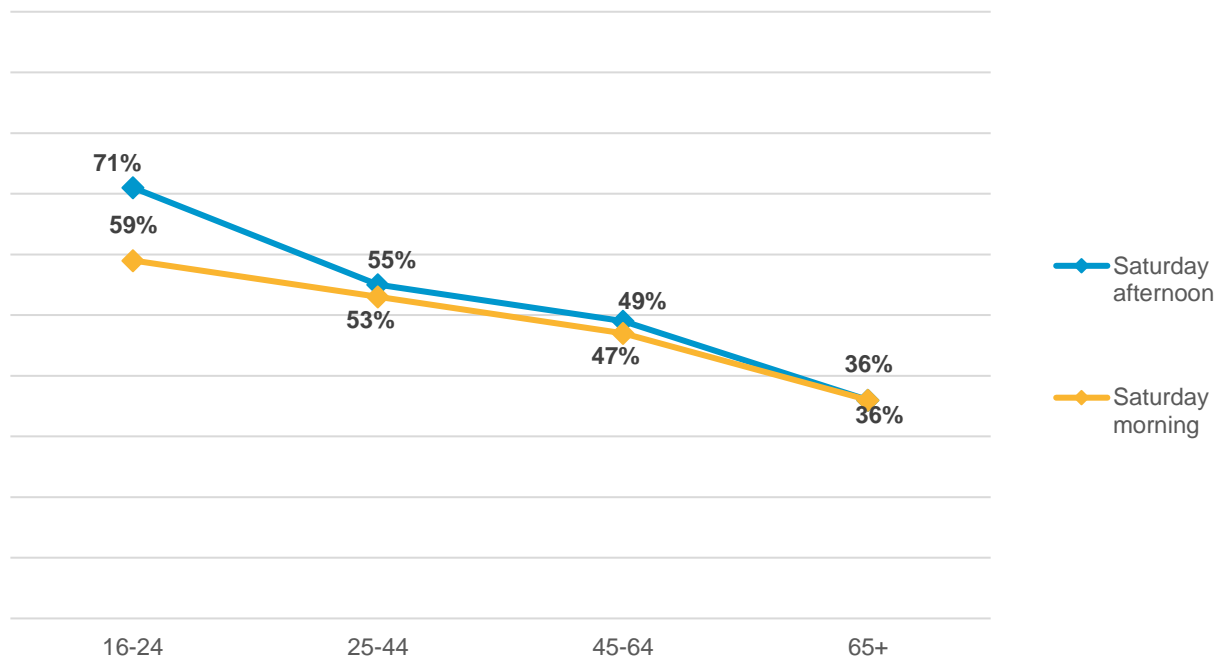*Base: Library users (1,635)*

As shown in *Figure 90*, preference for Saturday afternoons and Saturday mornings amongst users falls with age, with those aged 16-24 more likely to prefer Saturday afternoons (71%) and Saturday mornings (59%) than other age groups.

Figure 90 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13) – Saturday afternoon and morning by age group
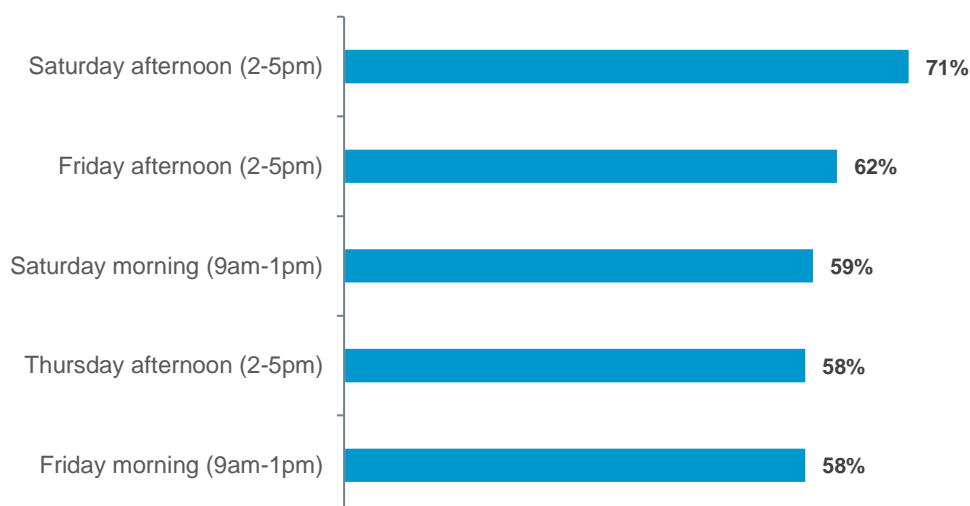*Base: Users 16-24 (78); users 25-44 (457); users 45-64 (503); users 65+ (557)*

Figure 91 shows the five most commonly preferred days and times for 16-24 year old users. As shown, Saturday afternoons were most popular (71%), followed by Friday afternoons (62%). Six in ten preferred Saturday mornings (59%), closely followed by Thursday afternoons (58%) and Friday mornings (58%).

Figure 91 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13) – top five
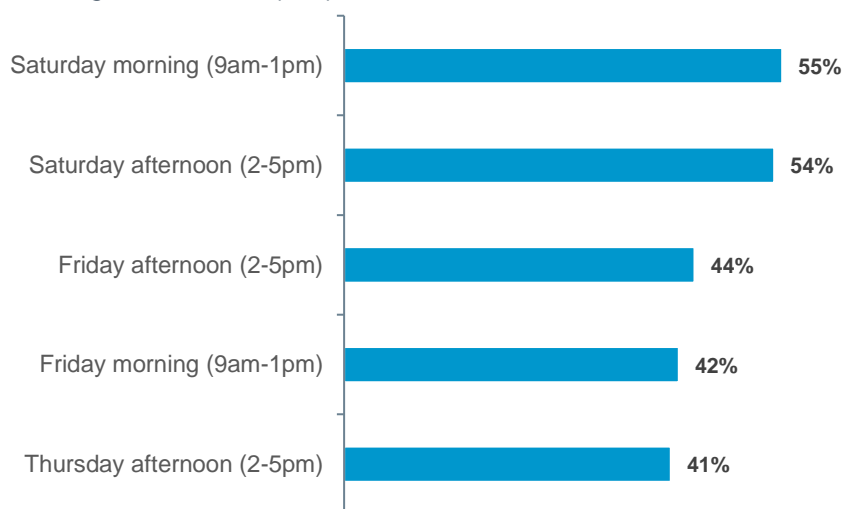*Base: Users aged 16-24 (78)*

For parents, carers and guardians Saturday mornings and Saturday afternoons were the most popular times (55% and 54% respectively). This is shown in *Figure 92*.

Figure 92 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13) – top five
Base: Parent/carer/guardian users (536)

Saturday morning (9am-1pm)	55%
Saturday afternoon (2-5pm)	54%
Friday afternoon (2-5pm)	44%
Friday morning (9am-1pm)	42%
Thursday afternoon (2-5pm)	41%

Figure 93 shows the five most popular times of the week amongst users living in Birkenhead. As can be seen, Saturday afternoon was most popular (53%), followed by Friday afternoon and Thursday afternoon (both 48%). Birkenhead was the only area in which Tuesday afternoon was in the five most popular days and times (47%).

Figure 93 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13) – top five
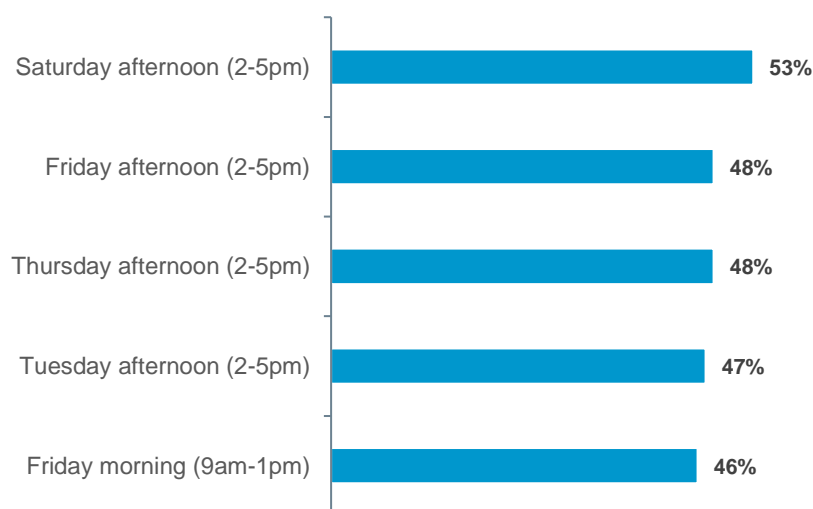*Base: Users in Birkenhead constituency area (246)*

Saturday afternoon (2-5pm)	53%
Friday afternoon (2-5pm)	48%
Thursday afternoon (2-5pm)	48%
Tuesday afternoon (2-5pm)	47%
Friday morning (9am-1pm)	46%

As shown in *Figure 94*, users living in the Wallasey area most commonly preferred Saturday afternoon and Friday afternoon (both 51%). Wallasey was the only area in which Wednesday afternoon was in the five most popular times (48%).

Figure 94 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13) – top five
Base: Users in Wallasey constituency area (322)

Amongst Wirral South users, Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon were the most popular times (both 42%), followed very closely by Monday afternoon (41%) and Monday morning (40%). Wirral South was the only area to have Monday afternoons in the five most common times (41%). This is shown in *Figure 95*.

Figure 95 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13) – top five
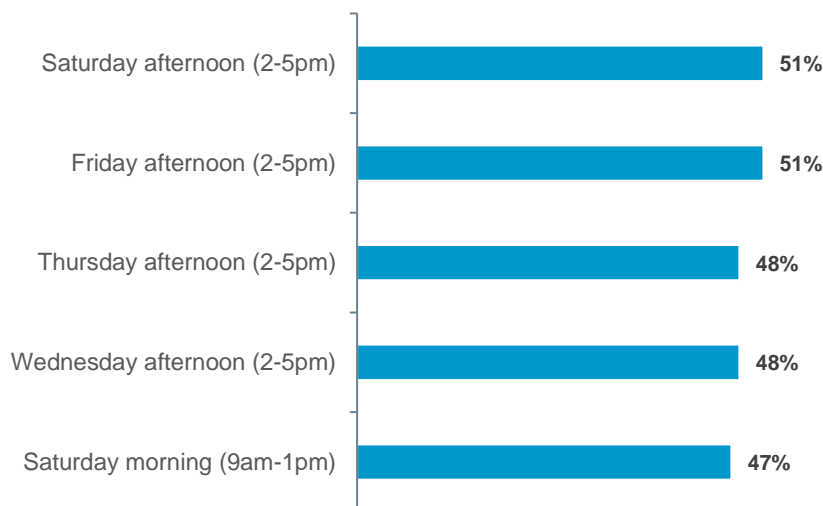*Base: Users in Wirral South constituency area (395)*

For Wirral West users, Saturday morning was most popular (50%), followed by Monday morning and Saturday afternoon (both 46%). This is shown in *Figure 96*.

Figure 96 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13) – top five
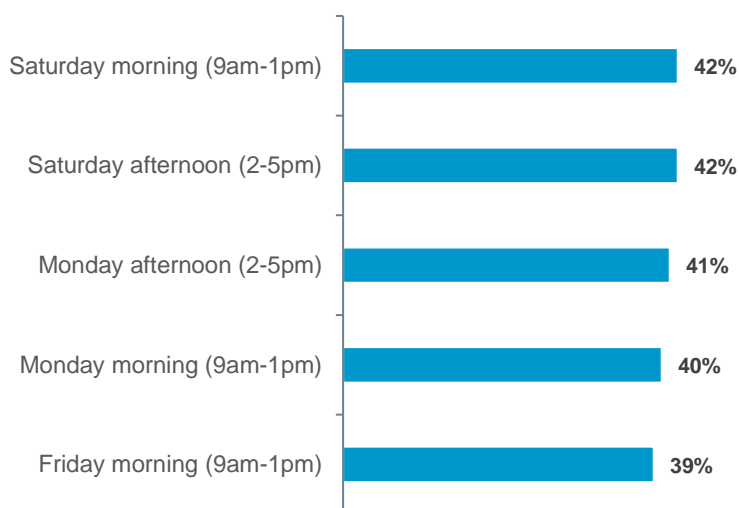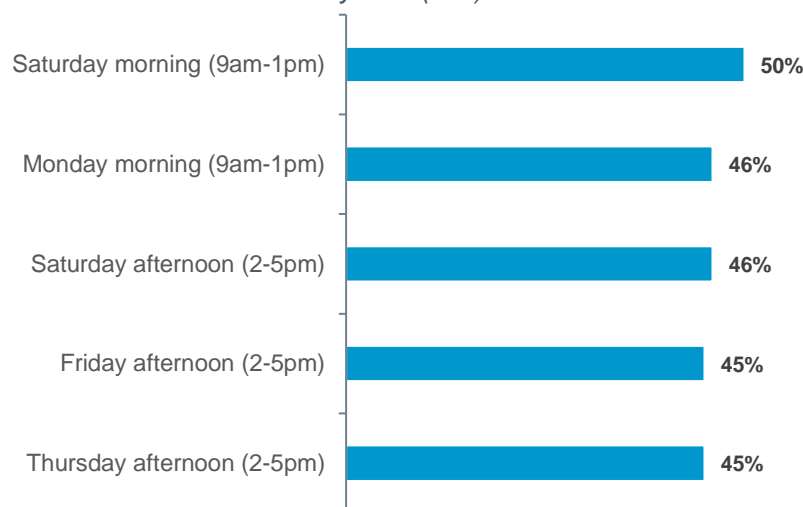*Base: Users in Wirral West constituency area (407)*

Figure 97 shows the most popular times of the week amongst users who live in areas of high deprivation. Over half said they preferred Saturday afternoon (52%), which was the most popular response. This was followed by Friday afternoon (47%), and Thursday and Wednesday afternoons (both 46%). Four out of five of the most popular times were afternoons.

Figure 97 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13) – top five
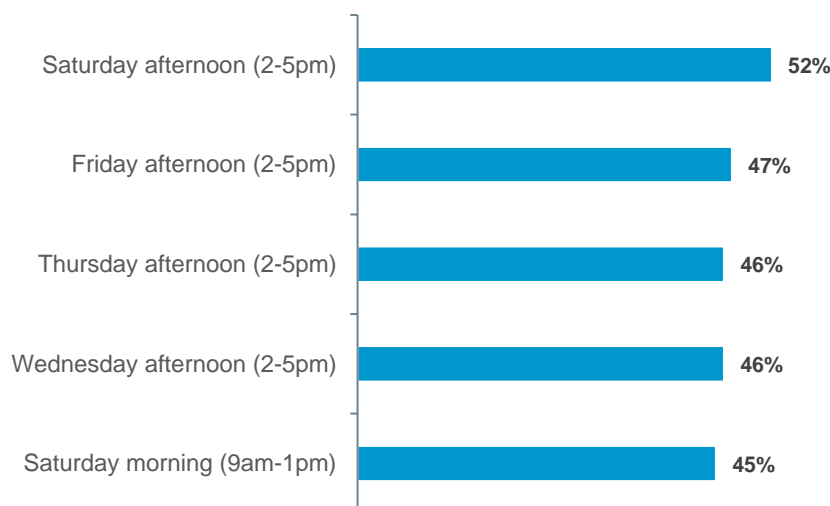*Base: Users living in areas of higher deprivation (451)*

Figure 98 – Community and city libraries remaining open under Option 3 (recommended option)

Wirral libraries that would remain open under Option 3 (recommended option) are categorised as community libraries and central libraries.

Community libraries are: Eastham Library, Heswall Library, Upton Library, and Moreton Library

City libraries are: Bebington Library, Birkenhead Library, Wallasey Library and West Kirby Library

Figure 99 shows the most popular times of the week amongst central library users. As shown, Saturday afternoon was the most popular (52%), followed by Friday afternoon (48%). A further 47% preferred Thursday afternoon, 46% Saturday morning and 46% Wednesday afternoon.

Figure 99 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13) – top five
Base: Central library users (675)

In contrast, the most popular time amongst users of community libraries was Friday morning (44%), followed by Saturday morning and Friday afternoon (both 43%). Monday afternoon was fourth most popular (41%) and Saturday afternoon fifth (40%). This is shown in *Figure 100*.

Figure 100 – What day of the week/time of day, if any, would you most prefer to use a library or library service? (Q12 and Q13) – top five
Base: Community library users (326)

2.7   Mobile library

Figure 101 – Mobile library

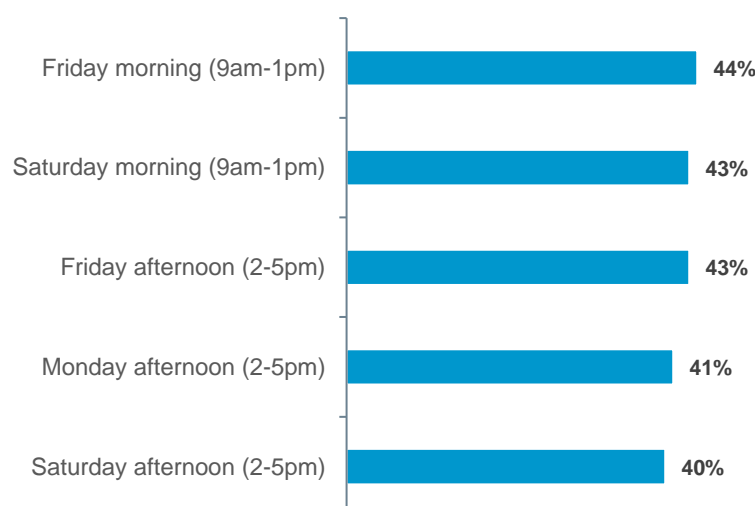**Mobile library**
The council is considering the provision of a mobile library service as part of its future operating model.

The mobile library would be fully electric with a roof mounted solar panel to minimise its environmental footprint. It would have capacity for 3,000 books and sufficient space for people to move around. The mobile library would initially focus in communities where a library closure has been proposed, evolving as the need and/or demand emerges. As well as a core library offer (free access to books and printed material) the intention would be to provide digital provision such as I.T., printing and copying facilities, and to explore the feasibility of roaming Wi-Fi. The service would be supplemented by a programme of outreach work supported by a core team of strategic librarians and potential partners such as the NHS, schools, community groups and one stop shops.

Survey respondents were asked if they would use a mobile library service if it was offered in the borough. Overall, 14% said they *definitely* would and 30% *maybe*, resulting in 44% who might use it. Around a half said they would not use it (49%). This is shown in *Figure 102*.

Figure 102 – If it was offered, do you think you would use a mobile library service? (Q14)
Base: All respondents (2,023)

Four in ten might use a mobile library service

As shown in *Figure 103*, the same proportion of self-completion survey respondents and interviewer led survey respondents said they might use a mobile library service (44%). However, the proportion who said they would not was larger in the interviewer led survey (54% compared with 45%).

Figure 103 – If it was offered, do you think you would use a mobile library service? (Q14) – by survey type
Base: Self-completion survey respondents (1,123); interviewer led survey respondents (900)

Although a larger proportion of service users said they might use a mobile library service (47%), three in ten non-users said they might (31%). This is shown in *Figure 104*.

Figure 104 – If it was offered, do you think you would use a mobile library service? (Q14) – by library usage
Base: Users (1,638); non-users (381)

As shown in *Figure 105*, females were more likely than males to say they might use a mobile library service (49% compared with 38%).

Figure 105 – If it was offered, do you think you would use a mobile library service? (Q14) – by gender
Base: Females (1,267); males (681)

Those in the youngest age group (16-24) were most likely to say they might use a mobile library (56%), with likelihood of using falling by age. By contrast, 41% of those aged 45-64 and 65+ said they might. This is shown in *Figure 106*.

Figure 106 – If it was offered, do you think you would use a mobile library service? (Q14) – Yes, overall – by age group
Base: 16-24 (142); 25-44 (565); 45-64 (636); 65+ (633)

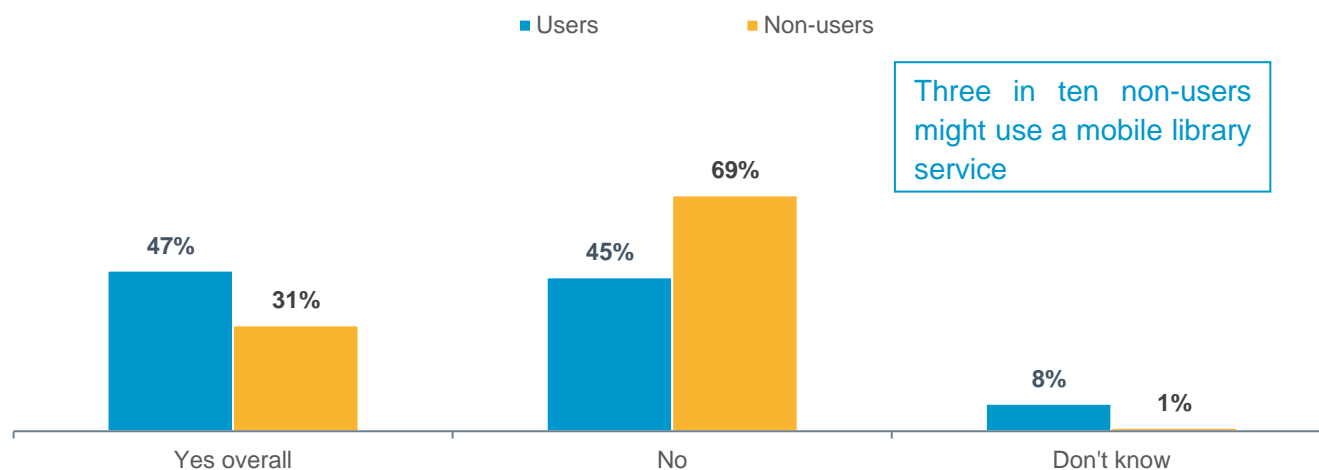As shown in *Figure 107*, parents, carers and guardians were more likely to say they might use a mobile library (49%) than those who were not parents, carers or guardians (43%).

Figure 107 – If it was offered, do you think you would use a mobile library service? (Q14) – by parental status
Base: parents, carers or guardians (618); non-parents (1,328)

As shown in *Figure 108*, larger proportions in Wirral West and Wirral South said they might use a mobile library (49% and 48% respectively) than those living in Birkenhead and Wallasey (43% and 41% respectively).

Figure 108 – If it was offered, do you think you would use a mobile library service? (Q14) – by constituency area
Base: Birkenhead (393); Wallasey (452); Wirral South (450); Wirral West (446)

Survey respondents who said they would not use a mobile library service were asked the reasons why. As shown in *Figure 109*, the most common reason was preferring to go to a library building instead (56%), followed by 32% doubting it would provide the service they needed. A quarter said they did not wish to use the library service at all (24%) and a further 18% did not think it would be available at the times they would wish to use it.

Figure 109 – Why wouldn't you use a mobile library service? (Q15)
Base: Those who would not use a mobile library (996)

Preferring to use a libary in a building was the most common reason for not wanting to use a mobile library

Other reasons for not using a mobile library most commonly included using online library services instead, there being no space for groups or socialising, feeling that it was unlikely to be wheelchair accessible, or that there would be a limited book stock, and that it would be dependent on times and stops.

Survey respondents who said they might use a mobile library were asked what other services they would like to see provided, in addition to the core library service. Respondents could select as many responses as applied. As shown in *Figure 110*, digital services was most common (51%), followed very closely by activities and events related to library services (50%). A further 46% said they would like to see Story Time, and 45% each selected council information and other services and Click and Collect. These were closely followed by author visits (44%).

Figure 110 – In addition to the core library service (access to books and spoken word), which other service or services listed below, if any, would you like to see on a mobile library? (Q16)
Base: Those who might use a mobile library (1,026)

As shown in *Figure 111*, there were a few differences by gender. For example, females were more likely than males to say they would like to see activities and events related to library services (55% compared with 36%), Story Time (52% compared with 27%), author visits (48% compared with 35%) and reading groups (49% compared with 24%). Activities and events was most commonly selected by females (55%), whereas for males digital services was the most common response (52%).

Figure 111 – In addition to the core library service (access to books and spoken word), which other service or services listed below, if any, would you like to see on a mobile library? (Q16) – by gender
Base: Females who might use mobile library (719); males who might use mobile library (278)

Service	Overall	Females	Males
Digital services	51%	50%	52%
Activities/events related to library services	50%	55%	36%
Story Time	46%	52%	27%
Council information and other council services	45%	46%	43%
Click and Collect	45%	45%	44%
Author visits (children and adults)	44%	48%	35%
Reading groups	42%	49%	24%
Partnered programmes	33%	32%	32%
None of the above	4%	3%	6%
Don't know	5%	5%	5%

There were also a few differences between the youngest age group (16-24) and older age groups. Those aged 16-24 were less likely to say they wanted to see activities and events related to library services (26%), Story Time (18%), council information and other council services (18%), and reading groups (20%). For that age group, digital services was the most common response (50%). This is shown in *Figure 112*.

Figure 112 – In addition to the core library service (access to books and spoken word), which other service or services listed below, if any, would you like to see on a mobile library? (Q16) – by age group
Base: Those who would use mobile library aged 16-24 (80); 25-44 (307); 45-64 (315); 65+ (306)

Service	Overall	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+
Digital services	51%	50%	49%	56%	48%
Activities/events related to library services	50%	26%	51%	53%	52%
Story Time	46%	18%	57%	49%	38%
Council information and other council services	45%	18%	34%	52%	57%
Click and Collect	45%	43%	39%	49%	46%
Author visits (children and adults)	44%	31%	52%	45%	39%
Reading groups	42%	20%	42%	46%	45%
Partnered programmes	33%	23%	31%	36%	33%
None of the above	4%	4%	2%	3%	7%
Don't know	5%	1%	4%	6%	7%

Amongst parents, carers and guardians, Story Time was most popular (65%). By contrast, 35% of those who were not parents, carers or guardians said they wanted to see Story Time. Parents, carers and guardians were also more likely to suggest author visits (52% compared with 41%) and less likely to suggest council information and other council services (37% compared with 50%). This is shown in *Figure 113*.

Figure 113 – In addition to the core library service (access to books and spoken word), which other service or services listed below, if any, would you like to see on a mobile library? (Q16) – by parental status
Base: Parents, carers or guardians who might use mobile library (341); non-parents (650)

Service	Overall	Parents, carers or guardians	Non-parents
Digital services	51%	50%	53%
Activities/events related to library services	50%	52%	49%
Story Time	46%	65%	35%
Council information and other council services	45%	37%	50%
Click and Collect	45%	45%	46%
Author visits (children and adults)	44%	52%	41%
Reading groups	42%	46%	40%
Partnered programmes	33%	32%	33%
None of the above	4%	1%	6%
Don't know	5%	5%	5%

By health status, those who had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more were more likely to say they wanted to see digital services than those who did not have a condition or illness (58% compared with 50%). This is shown in *Figure 114*.

Figure 114 – In addition to the core library service (access to books and spoken word), which other service or services listed below, if any, would you like to see on a mobile library? (Q16) – by health status
Base: Those with a health condition or illness who might use mobile library (214); non-parents (759)

Service	Overall	Physical/mental health condition/illness	No condition/illness
Digital services	51%	58%	50%
Activities/events related to library services	50%	52%	49%
Story Time	46%	39%	47%
Council information and other council services	45%	51%	44%
Click and Collect	45%	45%	46%
Author visits (children and adults)	44%	39%	45%
Reading groups	42%	43%	42%
Partnered programmes	33%	35%	32%
None of the above	4%	4%	4%
Don't know	5%	4%	6%

2.8   Further comments on the proposed options

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they had any other comments about the proposed options for the future of the Library Service. As shown in *Figure 115*, the most common theme was that any reduction in the service is negative or that libraries should not be closed (30%). A further quarter highlighted that libraries are important to communities or as social hubs (25%) and 20% mentioned that libraries are important to children or for education. One in ten suggested that libraries should be promoted more or greater use of them encouraged (10%).

Figure 115 – Have you got any other comments about the proposed options for the future of the Library Service? (Q17)
Base: Those who provided a response (900)

Theme	%
Any reduction is negative/don't close libraries	30%
Libraries are important to communities/social hubs	25%
Libraries are important to children/for education	20%
Promote/encourage greater use of libraries	10%
Libraries vital for low income/disadvantaged	9%
Libraries improve mental health/wellbeing	7%
Save money elsewhere/stop wasting money	6%
Amend the options/keep another library open	6%
Libraries should be local/in walking distance	5%
Libraries are important to the elderly	5%
Libraries provide access to internet/computers	5%
Agree/need to save money/too many libraries	5%
Generate income (e.g. cafés, room hire)	5%
Improve libraries/invest more/modernise	5%
Everyone/all areas should have equal access to libraries	5%
Complaint about the council	4%
Maintain public services	4%
Dislike idea of mobile libraries	3%
Not everyone can/wants to access services online	3%

Theme	%
Negative for areas losing a library	3%
Complaint about consultation	3%
I/others will not be able to access a library	3%
Community-run libraries/use volunteers	3%
Library staff are important/save jobs	2%
My local/preferred library will close	2%
Longer hours/evening/weekend offer needed	2%
Mobile libraries are a good idea	2%
Difficult for non-drivers/lack of public transport	2%
Question/more information needed	2%
Difficult for disabled/less mobile people to travel	1%
Expand/promote the online offer	1%
Amended option 3 preferred	1%
Reduce opening times instead of closing libraries	1%
Council has responsibility/duty to provide libraries	1%
Consider parking facilities	1%

3. Focus group findings

Findings from the eight focus groups have provided additional insight and greater understanding of residents' thoughts and opinions about the different options for the libraries, and how changes may impact them and the Wirral community. The focus groups enabled individuals to describe how they used libraries and what libraries meant to them.

This section of the report is divided into the following sections:

- Usage of the library service
- Importance of the library service
- Perceptions of the library service
- Challenges facing libraries
- Future of the library service options
- Mobile library
- Additional comments from participants

3.1 Usage of the library service

Libraries are important to the community, particularly for older people who may not see many people and those on low incomes that struggle to afford to purchase books. They are important for socialising, particularly for older people. Some also use the library to keep warm and read a newspaper.

Current library usage
Participants that used the library were keen to emphasise that they use the library on a regular basis.

> *I use the online renewal service and book ordering service as well.*
>
> High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

> *Every couple of weeks I take a couple of books out. I'm an avid reader. I've been using them since I was seven or eight.*
>
> Older people group

Some participants commented that they like to use their library for work purposes.

> *With Birkenhead Library being the nearest to me, I quite commonly use that, mainly for catching up with work and that, although I do like to see what the latest books are there when I get the time.*
>
> Disability/long-term health conditions group

> *Sometimes I need access to books that the information isn't on the internet, it's not easily findable. There's patterns and graphics and various images that I just can't find, so I will go to Wallasey Central to be able to find them. Some of the books there are old, and they are quite good. And they're not available online. And it just makes a nice experience to go to that library as part of that kind of research trip, almost.*
>
> Younger people group

Additionally, some participants also used or had previously used libraries to study for educational purposes.

> *I tend to get about six books and then go back once a month and change them. I renew them online…I used to go and sit and study there.*
>
> High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

> *I think it can be a good place to study.*
>
> Secondary school pupil group

I have done many education courses and stuff. And they're valuable for people to get access to study material.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

However, although participants in the secondary school focus group used libraries with their parents when they were at primary school, they rarely used public libraries now they were in secondary school as they were provided with books to read by school, or accessed other resources such as the internet for information needed as part of the schoolwork.

I think mine was quite a few years ago as well. It was like, when I was in primary school.

Secondary school pupil group

Last time I was in a library it would have been in primary school.

Secondary school pupil group

Participants also said that they used some of the other services that libraries offer, such as photocopying and printing, the computers and access to the internet.

The library I use predominantly would be Birkenhead Library. In adult years, I've used that for the computers and the printing and scanning services.

Parents/carers group

Borrowing books, use of computers. I've also accessed the printing services and stuff like that that are available.

Younger people group

Many simply enjoy the general experience and atmosphere of visiting a library

Some participants also spoke about the general atmosphere in libraries, describing their visits as an experience because it was a nice building to visit and had good facilities, where you could sit and read in peace.

I use Birkenhead Library the most, but I will travel to any library to get books. I did that when I was younger as well. For me, it was like a bit of a day out, so I'd make the effort of getting the bus to places…. I think I've probably been to half the libraries on the Wirral at some point.

Younger people group

The reason why people go to Wallasey Central is not just because it's a library. It's also because it's a beautiful building. It's homey. It has couches, you can sit there with your kids, you can read the paper. It's an atmosphere that…you can't turn into a data chart. And so many of our libraries have that.

Younger people group

3.2 Importance of the library service

Importance of libraries for children

During the focus groups, participants were asked about the importance of libraries and what they meant to them individually, to their family and to the wider community.

It was clear that participants believed libraries played a significant role in education and are a very important resource for children, particularly when they are young (pre-school and primary school age). Participants spoke about the various events and community activities that are held at libraries such as Rhyme Time, singing and mums and tots sessions.

I used to use Wallasey Village Library a lot…And the Central Wallasey Library. Now my son's older, we use it a bit less, but I'd say at least once a week or so…The librarians still know his name. They

send him book tokens, and they're like, 'Oh, you've grown so much!' It's like a home from home for him.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

Definitely when my children were younger they had groups there, singing and other sorts of activities. So, where I'm coming from it's that standpoint of that local library in that local community that I'd be losing.

Parents/carers group

As a mum, I've taken my son there when he was a bit older and could kind of read books himself. I've been using the library of recent times when the playgroups have started opening up again, you know, the mums and tots sessions in the morning.

Parents/carers group

My daughter is five, and it's nice to be able to go and visit a library. Although we've got stacks of books at home, just the ability to go there and have a look at the books, and sit and choose them, or read them before we pick them and bring them home. And also when the kids have done like the summer book challenges and stuff like that, it does encourage them.

Younger people group

A safe space for children

Participants thought that libraries provided a safe haven for children, ranging from a space to do their homework after school to a safe space to avoid any issues they might have at home.

For children, it's a safe place after school. When they're going home to abuse or whatever they're going home to, that was a little sanctuary for the children at Seacombe for at least hour and a half to do the homework. The staff used to give them juice and biscuits. They knew all their names. The children were well-behaved and they felt safe. That's just gone now.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

I'm a primary school teacher. So in terms of benefiting having the libraries that children can access all over the place, and not just having to go to one central library, which was one of the consultation options. I'd like to have as many libraries as possible accessible for my own children, and also for children I teach as well.

Parents/carers group

I've got an older child, and it just encourages that sort of independence, to be able to go to the library that is a safe place. Somewhere that they can go to and they've got that independence in looking for books or utilising services, whether it be computer services, or anything.

Younger people group

A place for children to learn to enjoy books/reading

Participants believed that libraries played an important role in encouraging children to read for pleasure and develop good reading habits for the future.

They were reading for pleasure. Whereas at school, they dissect it. They don't really read for pleasure very much.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

I think that from a really young age, it's what got me into reading. I think it's quite a rare thing that, children especially, get a free browse at books. Because I know they have books at school, but I don't think they get that kind of free choice in a lot of instances.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

When my daughter was young and I was looking for things to do, I used to just bring her to the library and we'd just go through the kids' books and spend a couple of hours, and it was nice. It's just a nice place.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

Libraries play an important role in the wider community – they are not just about books

Some participants were keen to highlight libraries were not just about borrowing books and other resources. They highlighted that library usage had changed and facilities had adapted over the years, and libraries were now places where the community could come together for events, and community groups could get together for different activities. Some described libraries as community hubs. There was concern that if libraries closed, the wider community and community groups would be disadvantaged and be negatively affected.

> *We have community groups that have used the library for varying things, and it just has become a wonderful focus for the village.*
>
> Friends of Library group

> *They're kind of like a community hub. Lots of people have different uses for them, it's not necessarily about books. So I do think they're important to lots of different people for different reasons.*
>
> Disability/long-term health conditions group

> *Libraries have always been important to people around here, and that that tradition has come down through the generations, as others have been saying today. And it's primarily – because books are so cheap these days – it's primarily the social aspect of what a library can provide that's most important now.*
>
> High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

> *When it's open, we run a cinema in here, and we run a sewing group. And we help with all the children's work that the librarians do. And we do talks in here. And we've raised quite a lot of money for our library. All the furniture you see in here, we've bought.*
>
> Older people group

A place for people to socialise and make friends

It was also evident that libraries were places that people used to socialise and make friends, with some residents using the library to read a newspaper in a warm environment and others agreeing to meet with friends, thereby playing a key role in reducing isolation and loneliness. They are also places where likeminded people visit to borrow books and read, so people feel very comfortable when visiting them.

> *Single older people who maybe have lost a spouse will come in, and they'll sit around the table and read the newspapers with people they see maybe every day. So it's a hugely important social gathering place.*
>
> High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

> *A library is somewhere where you can kind of come out of your comfort zone and be around people who are like you, and who like books.*
>
> Secondary school pupil group

> *They're missing the whole point: that the library is a community centre. It's a community hub. And we noticed that when we started running our little film group, people were coming singly. They were lonely…But these people started bonding, and they started going out for lunch together.*
>
> Older people group

> *I also feel that they are a source for helping reduce social isolation, especially now, because we're starting to move away from COVID and people want to get socialising again, and come down to the library to read the newspapers or read a book. And that's quite a common place that people could go to make new friends.*
>
> Disability/long-term health conditions group

Libraries are important for wellbeing – removing libraries could cause long-term problems

With libraries being used for a wide range of reasons including community events, community groups, a safe place for children to do their homework, and people using them socially and to keep warm, there was

significant concern that by closing some libraries would cause short and long-term wellbeing problems, particularly for those who are vulnerable in society.

> *Just in terms of them being a free and safe place for people to go, that's quiet and warm, things like that. For people that are struggling financially, emotionally, people that are sort of a little bit marginalised in society would be regulars there, and it's just a safe and sort of friendly place for them to go.*
>
> Disability/long-term health conditions group

> *I think it's more important after the pandemic, because people realise just how quickly mental health can deteriorate when they don't have people to see and places to go. So libraries, I think, will be more important as people try to recover their mental health.*
>
> High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

> *It's also like a way to get outdoors for older people as well and interact, which is good for mental health.*
>
> Secondary school pupil group

> *The rector of our local church, at a public meeting we held recently made this point so strongly about the community wealth of our libraries, the groups, support we give in helping to improve literacy, all the rest of that, of how short-term it is to take out of communities valuable community wealth, which means in ten years' time that community will be demonstrating more mental health problems, more antisocial behaviour, lower literacy rates, and the council will have to pay to pick up the results of those consequences. It's short-term desperation.*
>
> Friends of Library group

Literacy levels could be impacted negatively if libraries are closed

There was real concern that there would be a significant negative impact on literacy levels amongst children in the borough if libraries were closed, and even an impact on adult literacy given that some libraries provide adult literacy courses.

> *If the government have just put up a load of money onto the North West levelling up, those people are dropping behind in reading, writing, arithmetic etc. So, one fights against the other. We're encouraging this lowering of standards, yet the government are trying to push it up.*
>
> Friends of Library group

> *If they kept libraries open, they encouraged the schools to take the children to the libraries, they can learn to read books, not tablets and what have you. Kids need books. The literacy is bad in children and the spelling is disgusting, because they don't read books.*
>
> Older people group

> *In this library they run literacy sessions where they're teaching adults to read.*
>
> Older people group

Libraries are important to those on low income/deprived communities – they provide one of the last free resources in the community

There was strong agreement amongst participants that, as libraries were free to all and provide access to a wide range of resources including books, that those on low incomes and living in deprived areas would be impacted the most, as they did not have the financial means to access these resources otherwise.

> *Someone said earlier, 'Books are cheap'. Well yes, books are cheaper than when I was young, or my son, but there's also a lot of people who are having to go to food banks for food…So it's even more important.*
>
> High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

> *There's not many things that you can actually get now which are free. You have to pay for everything. It's one of the last things standing that you can go into a library, and you've got all that*

knowledge and information…and you can just go in there and have access to it, it's there…If it's taken away, it'll be a shame.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

Some people can't afford books and things. They might want to read books but they don't have the money to buy them.

Secondary school pupil group

I think the council need to see that there's going to be a cost saving if you can help the children, and you can keep them warm, and they've got somewhere to come. They're not going to be out on the street, they're not going to be stuck at home. There has to be a plus to that in the wider context. It's not just people coming in and getting a book out…In this day and age, we've got to put in as much community support as we can until things get a bit easier.

Older people group

Libraries provide vital access to internet/computers which some cannot afford at home

In addition to being able to borrow books, DVDs and other resources, participants were worried that many people do not have Wi-Fi or access to the internet at home, simply because they cannot afford it, and they use these services and resources for free at libraries. There was concern that without easy access to these services and resources, those on low incomes and living in deprived areas will be negatively impacted if there are library closures.

Some people don't have access to their own internet, or computer, or whatever. Increasingly everything's going online these days, everything has been driven online, and it's going to exclude a lot of people. So that's why I think the libraries are important, because every library has an online facility for people to use. And also for research purposes as well for people. Again, a lot of people don't have money to spend on books, so it's a good place for them to come and read, learn stuff, or for any research purposes that they might want to do.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

There's kids on the estate where I live who haven't got the money to buy computers, or for Wi-Fi at home either. So they can't do anything on the computer at home. They need the library.

Older people group

One of my bugbears at the moment is how everyone is assumed to have a car and a laptop. And there's a whole group of our society who are being disenfranchised by not being able to have a computer. Buses aren't running. Libraries opened in the first place to provide books to the populace who couldn't afford books. And now, at the very least, it ought to provide computer access to people who can't afford a computer, and can't get their benefits without one. I don't know what people are supposed to do, I really don't. It's cutting off vast swathes of people. And this is one place where they've got a chance to access things that we're lucky enough to be able to access.

Older people group

Those who were not regular library users tended to think libraries are still important

Although many participants were regular library users, some were not. However, those who did not use them regularly appreciated the services that libraries provide and believed they played an important role in their local community for a variety of reasons.

I'm not a regular user of the library, but I know quite a lot of people that are. So it's something that I think is important.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

They definitely, I think, are the type of investment where you get more out of it than actually goes into it, because of how many people will benefit from it, and how much that gives back in the long run.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

I don't often use the libraries, as I have the facility to access a lot of things from home or from work. But I do think it'd be a shame to lose the services, so I'm just interested in how it pans out.

Younger people group

3.3 Perceptions of the library service

Opening times are restrictive

It was felt by many participants that the opening times were too restrictive which meant some residents, particularly those that worked during the day, were unable to visit a library easily.

The times that they're open are quite restrictive for people, if they're working.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

Not having an evening opening is awful, because there's a lot of people who can't make it during the day.

Friends of Library group

It was suggested that opening in the evening, even if it was once a week, might be helpful to some library users that are unable to get to a library during traditional office hours.

It would be an ideal situation to have a library open one late night a week, up to about 8pm.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

Libraries do not appeal to younger people

There was a perception that libraries are aimed at older people, as they often do not have many books or facilities for older children (secondary school age) or teenagers. It was acknowledged that younger children (primary school age) often visit the library with their parents, as there was a good choice of books and resources for that age group, but the number of books for secondary school aged children was limited.

In libraries the selection is very adult and then young children, like primary school. When I'm older I think I will use it more because there will be more of an option for me, that I might like to read in the future. But now there's not as much stuff in the genre that I like to read. I don't really go in there that much. The books that I read normally, I get from a bookstore.

Secondary school pupil group

I have seen a decrease in the use of libraries, I've got to be honest about that. It's mostly our age group, from what I can see. There's never more than half a dozen people in the library…I would be upset if libraries disappeared, from my own point of view, but whether there's a use for them in the future I don't know.

Older people group

When specifically asked about books for older children, participants in the secondary school pupils focus group felt the range of books for their age group was not wide enough to be an attractive offering to them.

There's not that much of a selection of books. There's not ones that interest me, that I would read…If there was a wider selection of books then I think it would be more interesting to people.

Secondary school pupil group

I kind of agree that there's a gap between the young kids and the adults. There's not much for teenagers.

Secondary school pupil group

3.4   Challenges facing libraries

Lack of promotion of the service – many people do not realise they have reopened following lockdown

Some participants spoke about the lack of promotion of libraries within Wirral, particularly following closures of the libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. Some believed that a lot of residents in the Wirral did not know that the libraries had reopened, which had meant that libraries were currently underused.

Seacombe Library. I used to go every week…I think [it closed] when all this [the COVID-19 pandemic] started. I didn't even realise it was reopening here though, to be honest…It's been closed for at least two years.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

Even though the libraries are open as 'normal' as the libraries are, particularly Greasby, a lot of people don't know because there's not enough advertising of it.

Friends of Library group

Website and online services – improvements needed

Some participants, particularly in the younger people focus group, criticised the Council's library service website and the online library service, explaining that they thought it was not user friendly and was difficult to use on a smartphone.

I just use it to see what books are in and where they are. I think you can order books and request them to go to certain libraries, but I don't really do that because I think it's just quicker to go and get them myself. The website could do with updating, perhaps. It's not the nicest of websites, and there's some features on mobile which aren't that great.

Younger people group

Coming from a web design background myself, you recognise things like user flows and user experience things, and call to actions in the right places. Things like that just drive me mad. I've used it once before, and I've never gone back and used it again, just out of frustration…It probably switches people off from going and using it.

Younger people group

Demand for libraries has generally fallen

It was evident that participants thought that fewer people wanted, or needed, to visit libraries now, as they either did not have the time to visit a library or they bought books instead, as the cost of book has fallen over the last few decades.

Not a lot now, mainly because my wife buys a lot of books, and I tend to read those.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

I'm an infrequent library user really. I tend to read biographies and stuff like that, but I tend to pick them up from charity shops or other sources.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

People don't really want to make the effort to go, to walk or drive to a library…People would rather just order it and it would be there the next day.

Secondary school pupil group

Some participants also thought that demand for libraries, or particularly books, had fallen as people simply did not read as much as they used to.

I do wonder if people reading is a dying thing. Because in terms of where we are now, people on their phones constantly and with short attention spans, naturally, I think just the idea of sitting in front of a book, which doesn't provide you with any real stimulus, you've got to actually read the

words and make the effort…Compared to what is considered entertainment for a lot of kids these days…if you compare that to a book then they're like, 'Why would I want to read a book?'

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

People don't seem to appear to read any more. My wife doesn't read any more. My kids don't read.

Older people group

Furthermore, before the advent of the internet, when someone wanted to search for information, they would use a library. However, there is less need for this as many people search for information online and have online access at home, at work or at school.

Obviously now, with the internet, for research or for anything or for information searching, I tend to use that. But I do realise the importance of libraries for a lot of people.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

Obviously, there's a lot more information out there than there used to be. I use sites like Wikipedia and that to find out things I want to know. I don't use the library for that sort of information any more.

Older people group

The focus when libraries were established 100 years or so ago, it was purely about books and reading, whereas now we do get our information in different forms.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

Volunteer and Friends groups have faced barriers in supporting the library service in the same way as they had before the pandemic

Participants from the Wirral Libraries Friends focus group criticised that, since lockdowns had ended, they had not been allowed back into the libraries to provide the support they had given pre-pandemic. They complained that they had been stopped from arranging any events in the libraries or providing any support whatsoever. Only recently they had had confirmation form Wirral Council that they can hold events outside library opening times, but numbers are restricted and the paperwork that needs completing is a barrier. This has led to a sense of frustration for these volunteers.

The Friends group has opened for the library as volunteers for a long time now. One of the things we object to very strongly is that we're no longer allowed to come in on the days we would have and do anything to help.

Friends of Library group

Why can't the volunteers go in?…We can't hold evening functions, which is what we used to do, which brought money in to pay for speakers. We've been doing those for many, many years, and then all of a sudden, 'No, you can't'. Then last week I was told we could have 14, but it can't be within the opening hours of the library. We've got to fill in forms for health and safety, risk assessments, key holder information – three or four schedules have got to be completed…All of a sudden we can have up to 40 people, from yesterday…as long as we've completed the necessary paperwork, which we didn't have to do before.

Friends of Library group

3.5 Future of the library service options

The three options and the additional amended option for the future library services were summarised in each focus group and participants were asked several questions about their thoughts and opinions for each one. There were several cross-cutting themes that came from the discussions. Discussions around *Option 1* and *Option 2* have been combined as the points raised were the same. Discussions around *Option 3 (recommended option)* and *Option 3 as amended* have been reviewed separately.

Reducing the number of libraries in Option 1 and Option 2 was generally disliked amongst participants due to lack of library coverage. Participants want to keep as many open as possible
It was clear that participants strongly opposed *Option 1* and *Option 2* as they would result in the closure of many libraries across the borough, leaving either one library or four libraries remaining, which they believed would not work and provide the Wirral community with a comprehensive service that was accessible to everyone.

> *Personally, I'd like to see the option where the least libraries were shut…because I think the most important thing is keeping the physical libraries.*
>
> High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

> *Honestly, I think that if the council went for Option 1, they'd be riots in the streets. The amount of people who have come up to the desk while I've been working and saying, 'They're not going to close this, are they? They're not going to close this?' And that's in every library. No-one is happy about the idea of their local library being closed. They're very married to their local libraries, almost. So the idea that we'd get rid of all but one…I can't imagine the outrage.*
>
> Younger people group

> *All the other libraries, the physical buildings should remain, but they should be managed by a community association or an asset transfer. So we retain the space that is so important for people to meet in, but the council will gradually step away. As those become self-supporting, the council will save money. It won't save money immediately, which is what it wants to do, but over time it will save money.*
>
> High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

> *I still don't think it's good enough. I think it'd be a real shame to just have four libraries dotted about [Option 2]. The Wirral is too big, there's too many people. I still don't see how that's got the capacity to cater for everybody…I think it was Option 3 that suggested having the main libraries, but also satellites – and I do think that is the very least of what we should be offering.*
>
> Younger people group

Concern that there will be too much pressure on remaining library/libraries
There was concern that if a lot of libraries were closed, this may result in too many people using the remaining library/libraries and too much pressure would be placed on resources and staff, which would result in an inefficient service.

> *It will put a lot more pressure on one place, and will actually end up being more of a negative. It's not just a replacement, it's a downgrade.*
>
> Disability/long-term health conditions group

> *I just don't like the sound of Option 1 at all. I think it would be such a real shame, mainly because I just don't know that it's got the capacity to be able to deal with the demand of everybody accessing the services from one central place.*
>
> Younger people group

There was also a fear that having fewer libraries will result in overall usage falling
Participants were concerned that any reduction in the number of libraries available for residents to use would result in an overall decrease in usage, as many people would not be able to travel to an alternative library due to time or cost, which would result in them no longer using the service.

If this goes through, four libraries, no-one is going to access this service, because they're only going to go and use this service when they absolutely have to use it and they have no choice, when they need to print off important documents or photocopy legal documents or anything like that. We won't see the elderly coming in for their weekly books, we won't see mums coming in with their toddlers to read things unless they live very close. This is just going to cause the number of people using the service to drop dramatically.

Younger people group

Parking around there and actually accessing it would be difficult. It would also mean I could only sort of go there maybe on a weekend, with working and everything else. Whereas with a local library, I can get there when I finish work and I can still get there. That would be difficult for me. And it would mean my son would be missing out.

Parents/carers group

Having it centralised is just not feasible for the people we're trying to protect or support, the less fortunate in the community. How many parents will go past that library with the kids on their way home from school?

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

One participant commented that they thought that Wirral Council would then close remaining libraries at some point in the future due to low usage, which would result in a further reduction in the service.

This is just an excuse for the council to put all their eggs in one basket and then say people are not using it, so they can close it altogether, probably.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

Reducing the number of libraries could disadvantage vulnerable people, including those who have a disability and those who cannot afford to travel or find it difficult to travel

Disadvantaging vulnerable people from accessing remaining libraries due to distance and difficulty in travelling was a key concern for many participants. The cost of using public transport, and the possibility of having to use multiple buses to get to a library were two of the main issues highlighted, exacerbated further by a reduction in bus services in recent years.

The elderly, less mobile people, people in New Brighton now, where their local bus service doesn't go down their street, they certainly wouldn't be able to. And I'm sure there's people all over the borough like that.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

There's an awful lot of people who haven't got good mobility. I walk everywhere, I walk three times a day. But you've got to think about people who can't.

Older people group

This is not workable, and personally, I don't support this option. As well as the obvious issue of not everyone can access the internet, you've also got the fact that not everybody can travel. I know Birkenhead Library is quite well situated on most public transport routes, but some people are frail, some people can hardly get out of the house, through no fault of their own.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

For elderly and disabled people who are accessing the services, it just makes it so much more difficult for them to travel to those places. Because we've got a lot of libraries dotted about most places, there's usually somewhere that's pretty close to home for somebody to get to.

Younger people group

Low income families may be negatively impacted

In addition to the challenges already highlighted, participants also discussed other services that residents, particularly those on a low income, would struggle to access if they were unable to visit a library that was local to them. For example, the closure of local libraries might cause problems for those on low incomes

in accessing computers, thus creating a barrier to access to other council services and Government/ council support.

> *Again, having the one central library will exclude a lot of people who are on very low incomes. If you're at the extremes, like West Kirby, or even further out, getting into the central library on the bus will probably cost quite a bit of money these days. Buses aren't cheap…It's going to push the less fortunate out of the equation.*
>
> High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

> *What about the person who's living in Wallasey, who wants to claim his benefits, but he hasn't got a computer and he can't get to Birkenhead Central Library? It's not his fault.*
>
> Older people group

> *Some of the things like access to computers and IT…those are the sorts of things that the people who are benefiting from them the most, I think, are the least likely to be able to have perhaps their own transport, or to make the journey. So it's already those who are kind of finding life the hardest that I think will be penalised the most.*
>
> Parents/carers group

Concern that cost savings from closing libraries are not worthwhile and there has been a lack of consideration of the long-term cost to community

Some participants questioned the rationale behind the proposed closure of most libraires in *Option 1* and *Option 2*, as they perceived there to be a lack of consideration towards the long-term impact on communities if they lost their local libraries, which could have a financial impact on council resources in the future. They highlighted that the cost savings mentioned in the proposals all seemed to be for a short-term financial gain.

> *Okay, it might save £2.2 million now. But what is the long-term cost in the communities, with the children, with the education, whatever it is, looking towards the future? And I just think, given everything we've gone through recently with COVID and everything else, and how it has been a lot harder.*
>
> Parents/carers group

> *Although it's saving now, long-term…You know, look at even just the mental health impact of people not being able to access books and community support. That such a big factor in mental health, being able to feel part of your community. We might be saving now, but we're going to have even bigger costs later down the line.*
>
> Parents/carers group

> *I'd probably go so far to say that that option would adversely affect the mental health of a lot of older residents, mainly because there's three elements in there that are specifically isolating to that kind of target group. And based on what a lot of people are saying about going to the library, because it's homely, and because is there's a social aspect of it, if those people are going to the library because it's close as well and it's easy to get to, for that social aspect, then kind of them isolated through this home reader service online service, all that's going to do is affect those people, that demographic's mental health, which isn't good, and it isn't something that any local authority should be entertaining.*
>
> Younger people group

One participant was concerned about what would happen to all the resources in the libraries that are set to close and the environmental impact.

> *What happens to all the resources that are there, all of the books? Every single library across Wirral has how many hundreds of books? Are they just going to throw them all in the bin? They're all things that children could access, or people in our community. Are they just going to get rid of them, sell them? I don't know. It just seems such a loss, not just for us but for the environment as well. It*

seems really wasteful to just kind of go, 'Oh, we're only going to have this bit here'. It just doesn't make sense in my mind.

<div align="right">Parents/carers group</div>

Some acknowledged that savings did need to be made

There was some acknowledgement amongst participants that some savings did need to be made by Wirral Council within the library service due to reductions in the overall council budget.

They have to cut costs. In the end they may have to shut all libraries down. What is the most benefit, four libraries and a mobile library, or no libraries at all?

<div align="right">High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)</div>

I'm taking the community out of it, and I'm talking about books. So I would support that. I want to keep the libraries, but you've got to make cuts somewhere.

<div align="right">Older people group</div>

Looking at it from two sides, commercially there is a positive in there because you don't have to pay the number of staff that they currently pay in the libraries section. And that is a positive. As a forum you've got to kind of look at it from all angles, so that's why I'm suggesting that there. Whether I agree with it or not is a different matter!

<div align="right">Parents/carers group</div>

Some would not mind a reduction in the number of libraries if there was significant additional investment in the library service and the libraries that remain

Although participants did not generally support any closure of libraries, some suggested they would be open to the idea if there was significant additional investment in the library service (including a mobile library and the online library) and the libraries that remain.

This is my favoured option [Option 2], however, heavily caveated. Because we've just talked about the 'book in, book out' and the much wider reasons why we need public spaces. I would like to see one consolidated library which has all of the traditional services that a library provides, but not in Birkenhead Central, because it's not fully accessible. That's not acceptable. But we've got a huge regeneration programme going on in central Birkenhead, with tens of thousands of square feet of office space being provided. And it seemed to me that one way to encourage other businesses into Birkenhead is to expand the council's idea of moving its own estate into these new buildings, and include within that the library service, Wirral Archives as well, all the sort of services that a library provides, plus other research facilities.

<div align="right">High deprivation area group (Seacombe)</div>

I'm an infrequent user really, but it's more about maintaining the service for the community. But Option 1 certainly lacks detail. Would certain things be improved, like the online library? If that's the way they want to push things then they really need to pull their socks up.

<div align="right">High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)</div>

Option 3 (recommended option) was generally preferred to Option 1 and Option 2, as more libraries would remain open across the Wirral

Participants were generally more positive about *Option 3 (recommended option)* than *Option 1* and *Option 2*, as eight staffed libraries would remain open and there would be an additional five self-serve libraries.

I think this is a much more comfortable option, and it also gives the central part of Wirral a much better grasp of it. Because we were losing Upton Library on the last one, and we need something in the centre of the Wirral. Because we're already losing Woodchurch Library and Prenton Library, both of them are going. This feels much better, because at least there will be a library at Heswall and Eastham. It will complement the day centres much better, because the people that use the day centres can actually go to the library.

<div align="right">Disability/long-term health conditions group</div>

I've put them all into the map, and the coverage still has a couple of gaps, but is significantly better…People can get to other places with this option that they couldn't before, and that is the key thing.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

Acknowledgement that savings have to be made somewhere and this could be a good compromise

Similar to previous discussions, some participants did acknowledge that some financial savings had to be made by Wirral Council, and that *Option 3 (recommended option)* could be a good compromise in terms of saving money, whilst retaining as many libraries as possible.

I quite like this option, because at the end of the day, the status quo can't remain. I think that's clear from the budget savings. If the council doesn't agree on ways forward and to make the budget savings, then it will be determined by Westminster…The problem is kind of everyone says, 'No, we don't want any of those options'. So for me, out of the options, this one seemed viable.

Parents/carers group

This is the option I picked. It seemed to give a better coverage. We've got to be realistic, there have got to be some savings somewhere. So this is almost like the best of all of them.

Parents/carers group

I can't argue against the fact that there are things beyond our control, and indeed, some cases beyond the council's control. They have to do something, and if they have to do something, Option 3 is probably the only thing they can do, or even Option 3a, is what they have to do. Whilst I'm not happy with it, we have to accept that something needs to be done.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

The savings to be made in Option 3 (recommended option) are not much less than Option 2 and this was seen as a much better option in terms of provision

Participants noticed that when looking at the estimated savings made for the different options, that *Option 3 (recommended option)* was not much different to *Option 2*, particularly when considering that more libraries would be kept open.

The interesting thing is that, with a greatly expanded service the savings are not a lot less, compared with option 2. There's £200,000 in it.

Older people group

The last option [option 2] was saving £1 million, and this isn't far away from that, and it's much better than Option 2. So for the deficit in the saving, I think it's night and day between 2 and 3. I think this is much better than Option 2, and it's not that far away in what it's saving either.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

The difference in saving from Option 2 to 3, there wasn't kind of too much in it. So I think if I was going to go for one it would be this, because some of those areas that are mentioned, those are the ones where I would want to see services still remain, such as Beechwood, Seacombe, Liscard, places like that…I think that's keeping the service accessible and it's still having a presence across the borough.

Parents/carers group

It just shows you how little these libraries are being considered, because look at the saving. It's £814,000, as opposed to £1m. That £200,000 is a minute amount of money in the grand scope of a local authority budget. You know, £200,000 they'd spend on redecorating a room in the town hall. So the money can be found. I would say this is not an inefficient waste of money, in comparison to other things that the council spend their money on. I actually think it's good value for money.

Younger people group

Some felt the first two options were designed to show such a reduction in service that it would push people towards a preference for Option 3 (recommended option)

There was concern amongst some participants around the way the different options had been presented. Some felt that *Option 1* and *Option 2* were pitched to show such a reduction in service that any improvement on these options would be preferred by Wirral residents, leaving them more likely to accept some library closures like the ones that would occur under *Option 3 (recommended option)*.

> *It's kind of like asking if I prefer to be hit in the face three times or one time. I'd prefer to be hit in the face one time – but I'd really prefer not to be hit in the face at all, frankly. I still think that this would be a blow to our library service. And they really haven't done anything to suggest how this would actually improve the service. It's something that they've insisted in all their documents that this will somehow improve things, but if they plan on saving money then their only option is to just get rid.*
>
> Younger people group

> *I think it'd still be a real shame. There's obviously a lot more reach in terms of there being eight bases and then the five self-serves, but realistically, who is going to use the self-serves? They seem really quite impersonal as well, for people who do want that sort of library feel, that environment. It is just going to be a room where you can just get books. There's no kind of personal aspect to it at all. And also, if it does become a place where it's a hangout type of place, people are going to be reluctant to go there. So you could inevitably end up with Option 2 because people aren't utilising the services and they're just taken anyway. I feel like it's the very least that I would accept if I had to, if I had a choice, and I can see that they are offering more reach with the with the eight main bases, but it's still not sufficient enough, I wouldn't say.*
>
> Younger people group

> *I think obviously, that is better than any of the others. If it had to be that I would accept it, but I would always rather have more.*
>
> Parents/carers group

Some areas will still be left without easy access to a library under Option 3 (recommended option)

It was acknowledged, however, that even though more libraries would be kept open under *Option 3 (recommended option)*, there could still be problems for some residents in accessing an alternative library in areas where the local area would close.

> *You're going to have huge geographical problems, where you're going to have large areas – and most of them are in the most socioeconomic deprived areas – who've got nothing, absolutely nothing…You're going to have places like Beechwood and Woodchurch right in the middle, and they are incredibly poor, have all sorts of problems, and they are getting nothing.*
>
> Friends of Library group

> *I think the impact is difficult to say because people are different. I think if it was my family that was affected, where there's a will there's a way, so if it meant that once a week I took family members to a different library…then I would. But I appreciate that not everybody is able to do that, so it's a hard one.*
>
> Parents/carers group

> *If Options 1 and 2 disenfranchise all of Wirral from a meaningful library system, Option 3 is worse in some ways, because it disenfranchises some areas. So some areas will be well served, and some will have nothing. [For example], if a mother [in Bromborough] wants to have her child do the Summer Reading Challenge…and they don't have a car, they would have to get on a train or a bus to go to a library with their two children to get them to do the four visits and do the summer reading challenge. We reckon it would cost over £40 per family. So you're totally disenfranchising some areas from very meaningful interaction with literacy, with groups, with all sorts, whilst others are going on.*
>
> Friends of Library group

Some participants in the secondary school pupil group felt it was reasonable to have fewer libraries, as long as the remaining libraries were invested in

Whilst discussing Option 3, it was evident that pupils in the secondary school focus group were less likely to want all libraries to stay open and accepted that some libraries may have to close because of budget cuts or if a reduced number of library users made them unviable to keep open. Pupils were inclined to say that fewer libraries would be acceptable if there was more investment to improve the service and provide a wider range of resources.

> *I don't think that's a problem, honestly. If you have so many libraries that people don't go into, then I don't see the point of having all of them.*
>
> Secondary school pupil group

> *I think a lot more funding needs to go into libraries. Because I go into a library and sometimes the environment isn't as comfortable and modern as it should be.*
>
> Secondary school pupil group

> *This is just a small kind of area, I feel like having fewer libraries that are kept in better condition, more funding, and the home service library, is a more useful way to do things.*
>
> Secondary school pupil group

Some concerns about self-serve libraries

There was some negativity around self-serve library sites, particularly as there was uncertainty of how they would be run and what services would be offered. Concerns centred around security, antisocial behaviour and how they would be managed generally. More information about this can be found in the next section of the report.

> *'Staffed' – does that mean actual librarians, or just somebody who's paid to be there?*
>
> High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

> *If they're going to have to make redundancies, why don't we keep those people on and extend the opening hours of the library using that staff? Or are they going to move those staff, like they did during the lockdown, to other areas? How are they going to do that? Because it will cost them the same money…Where's the saving?*
>
> Friends of Library group

Option 3 as amended was seen by some as an improvement on Option 3 (recommended option)

When discussing *Option 3 as amended*, most participants preferred this option as there was an additional two libraries that would remain open (Greasby and Rock Ferry). However, participants had a lot of questions and concerns around community asset transfers and how they would work.

> *It's better than the other [Options 1, 2 and 3] ones.*
>
> Older people group

> *This definitely fills that gap I was talking about, that Greasby area. I think Greasby is one that has been overlooked a little bit. And it is probably the most central outside of the ones that were guaranteed to be saved.*
>
> Disability/long-term health conditions group

> *It's a slight improvement on the last one, and thus has to be recommended, or supported, in preference to all the others.*
>
> Disability/long-term health conditions group

Participants were largely unsure what community asset transfer was and how it would work. However, most had enough information to say that overall they did not support this approach, as they thought success relied on too many variables and that there would be too much of a reliance on volunteers. Participants in the Friends of Library group were particularly vocal about these concerns.

There's this whole thing of community asset transfer needs mentioning, on behalf of the libraries faced with closure. We're on a timescale of fighting to keep our library open, which ends at a meeting in June. We know that, and that's when the final decision will be made. At the same time, we're being asked to consider a community asset transfer for a library that's closed…I've asked questions of the group leading on community asset transfer, and they cannot give me any answers… What does the community asset transfer of a library mean? Does it mean the building with the books currently in it? Does it mean you are still a Wirral Library, but you run the building and staff it, but people are still able to get books from other libraries delivered, you know, you're still a Wirral Library of a sort?…Or a hybrid of the two, where you could buy that back in in other areas of the local authority where community asset transfer happens, there are services which can be bought back in? So your community group has to generate enough money to buy certain services back? They don't know. They've no idea.

<div align="right">Friends of Library group</div>

Following their own process, I hear that they've opened from the 28ᵗʰ to the 6ᵗʰ of May for expressions of interest. I've heard around Bromborough of various groups who think they will go in and just use the building for other purposes. But nobody is yet answering the base questions so that you could even express an interest. How can you express an interest if you don't know the basics?

<div align="right">Friends of Library group</div>

How do you transfer books between libraries? How do you get access to the computer systems? Who's going to manage the simple things, the photocopier machine? Who's going to manage the computers in the in the centre itself? How would we bring in money? Where would the funding come from?

<div align="right">Friends of Library group</div>

Concern that community asset transfers will not be successful, and affected libraries will end up closing anyway

Some participants believed that even if libraries were transferred to community groups, they might end up closing anyway as groups or organisations running them would struggle to generate an income to fund the library and would make heavy financial losses. They also cited examples of similar situations which have failed.

I think the community asset transfer is a smokescreen. I think they know there's no way libraries can generate the money. But I think it sounds good to councillors and the public to say, 'Oh, but where we might be closing the library, you know, you've got little groups who work there. It'll all be lovely, because they'll take it over'. And I think there are councillors and that's all they'll hear, 'Oh, good, you know, they're trying to do the right thing. We'll vote it through.' I would be interested to find out if any community asset transfer of a library takes place.

<div align="right">Friends of Library group</div>

So the community groups end up doing their dirty work and closing their libraries for them? It's what Liverpool Council did, the last five/six years. It failed, because the communities had to make the applications for the funding and the grants and stuff, and when they can't do it, they close it. So the council hasn't closed it, the community group has closed it.

<div align="right">High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)</div>

It would be given to the community. So the council divest themselves of all responsibility, and then the community have to organise a building, organise heating, staff, security, and all that sort of stuff. That's got to all come out of the public purse…It's just setting up to fail.

<div align="right">High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)</div>

Unrealistic to expect volunteers to be able to run a library service without funding

One significant concern stressed by participants, was that volunteers could not be expected to run a library without appropriate funding in place. They were concerned that a lot of money would be needed to run a library, maintain the building and provide resources, and it would not be fair to put this burden on a community group or an organisation.

This is this is probably my least favourite of all the options, because one, the community asset transfer I don't agree with. I feel like if it's the last available option ever, then yeah, okay, community asset transfer. But I don't think it's right to lump the burden of running a library onto a community group without there being sufficient kind of finance in place. You can't make money off the library, it's a free resource. You could put food and beverages in there, but that's only to just make a little bit of income on the side, that's not to run an entire building.

Younger people group

The idea of telling taxpayers, who already paying for this service, to then buy and run the service is doomed to fail. Because libraries do not make money…Who is going to be running this service? Who is going to buy this? Where are they going to get the money? Donations? Are we asking taxpayers to pay twice for a library service, both through taxes and charitable donations?...The idea that somebody out there is just going to magically run an entire library with no support is ludicrous. Who can do that?

Younger people group

Concern that volunteers can be unreliable

Many participants through it was unfair to rely on volunteers to run a library, given they were not paid to take on that responsibility. Furthermore, it was highlighted that some volunteers could be unreliable, and if they did not show up to staff a library on a given day it would impact a library's ability to open.

You'd need someone to put the books back on the proper shelves and things. People will bring them back and just leave them on the desk, won't they? If they're thinking that they can staff it with volunteers, then that won't work. Because if people are volunteers, they think, 'It's a sunny day, I'm only a volunteer'. I know this from experience, that they don't turn up.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

I think it's a lot of work for someone to just volunteer. You can't expect someone to keep a whole building in line if they're not being paid anything…They're doing all that work and they're not getting anything out of it…It would be better if they could get employed and get paid.

Secondary school pupil group

It sounds like a really good idea, but then the reality of what does that mean? I help out at a local Beaver group at the moment, and trying to get people to volunteer, to get parents to come and help out and that, it's just not the easiest thing in the world. So I'd worry about how many people would be available to do that, to be able to have that regular commitment.

Parents/carers group

I volunteer for a big local charity. And to manage our volunteers we have three employed members of staff. Because it's alright having a team of volunteers, but you do still need someone who's kind of overall responsible for making sure that that's working well.

Parents/carers group

Unfair for paid library staff to be replaced by volunteers

Many participants thought it was unfair to replace existing paid staff with volunteers, given that it would lead to someone who was qualified to be a librarian losing their job. Participants that were members of a Friends Group (attended the Older People group) were adamant that they would not want to run a library if it meant someone losing their job. They strongly believed that a Friends Group should only provide support where needed, such as by arranging community events and raising funding to purchase equipment and resources for the benefit of library users.

Our Friends group is absolutely adamant. We will volunteer to be community workers within here, and we get a good response. But we will not work in the library and take a job. And we certainly wouldn't take it over.

Older people group

We support the library staff 100%. If they want to do something then we will be there to serve cups of tea and buy the biscuits and everything. But we will not take their jobs.

Older people group

It's like saying to [library staff], 'You're a paid library assistant, but we're going to get someone in the community to do that on a volunteer basis, because your kind of experience and expertise is not really essential to how the service works', which is a horrible thing to say to anyone in any industry, to be honest.

Younger people group

However, some felt that volunteers can provide valuable support and, in some cases, already run services

In contrast, however, some participants thought it was a good idea to use volunteers, making comparisons with other services and voluntary organisations that rely on them.

I think there's a very strong point here about volunteer work. Increasingly now, many, many facilities are being made available to the public through volunteers. And I don't think that should be dismissed or perhaps thought down on. I'm in a voluntary group doing something that the council just doesn't do, so if that didn't get done, then it wouldn't get done at all. And things like food banks and all the rest of it. So that is a very important area that these libraries that may or may not come into existence, as laid out here, being run by volunteers, there are many people who are enthusiastic about libraries, who would do volunteer work.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

I think this has been ongoing in a lot of places. My sister is a volunteer in her local village library. And they have all the facilities, they have books to be transferred in, the computer systems are installed. It is possible, and I don't know why Wirral Council are not being open about it. It's happening, and it's happened for some years in other parts of the country. So it's not something new…It's out there.

Friends of Library group

The community asset group, they've talked about that before…I do think that's a nice idea. It's almost like the Friends of the Parks, where you have these volunteer groups who say they will look after the parks and kind of help the council kind of manage and maintain them.

Parents/carers group

Originally the libraries were open every single day, and then they went to every other day. And on the days when library staff didn't do it, volunteers did it…Why not pass it on to people who have already run the library? They have funding, they have parties already, they're the ones that have got petitions, who have been trying to save our library. There must be other communities that want to do that.

Parents/carers group

Prefer community asset transfer to library closures

It was also noted by some participants that although community asset transfers may not be a perfect solution given the reliance on volunteers and financial risk, keeping more libraries open under this scheme would be better than closing altogether.

It's better than just closing them.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

Irby has a very good library association called Friends of Irby Library. I'm not sure how many other libraries have a similar organisation, but this is very good and does a lot of work with Irby Library. I'm not sure how they would stand if they could actually take over Irby Library and run it as a separate entity. I'm not sure how that would work, or indeed, for any of the other libraries that are not going to open under any of the schemes. Obviously, if they could, then that would be absolutely fantastic. But it relies on money to run it and volunteers to help staff it. It would be good if that could happen, if the council could allow that to happen, then that would enable some of the ones that are

earmarked for closure to carry on some library business, which would be good, because Irby has a very good social side to it in terms of the Friends, coffee mornings, baby and toddler groups, all these sort of things.

<div align="right">Disability/long-term health conditions group</div>

Concern that there is not enough time for community groups and organisations to develop business plans for community asset transfers

Although there was a lot of uncertainty around community asset transfers, participants felt that there was not sufficient time for community groups and organisations to digest the requirements and develop suitable business plans to take over and manage a library, given the proposal sets a timeline of November 2022.

They're not really giving anyone much time to come up with a business plan, are they, if they've only given them until November? It's not very long for anyone. Everything's so uncertain with COVID at the moment, nobody really knows.

<div align="right">High deprivation area group (Seacombe)</div>

The 1st of November, that's what, six months away? It's not that long really to for community groups to get their act together and come forward with a plan, and apply for funding.

<div align="right">High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)</div>

Query as to why the council have chosen to include Greasby and Rock Ferry in Option 3 as amended

Participants were pleased that two additional libraries had been included in the list of libraries that would remain open, however, they were unsure as to why Greasby and Rock Ferry libraries had been chosen over other libraries that might close and wondered if it was a decision that had been made based on usage or location, as they felt that this was unclear in the information they had been provided with.

It's interesting why they decided in the end to include Greasby and Rock Ferry.

<div align="right">Older people group</div>

Have they done a survey of how many people are actually using the libraries, or used them when they were fully open? That's what they need to do. Was Rock Ferry Library used a lot? How have they worked it out?

<div align="right">Older people group</div>

I'd like to know what percentage of the population use them.

<div align="right">Older people group</div>

If I'm right in thinking, Greasby and Rock Ferry were also the libraries that were saved by those councillors as some sort of political trade-off deal. And if that's the case, then absolutely not, because libraries are not political volleyballs for councillors to kind of make plus points off. They are tangible services that need to be protected. You know, good on those councillors for trying to protect their own local libraries, but every councillors should be doing it in every single ward, not just Rock Ferry and Greasby.

<div align="right">Younger people group</div>

3.6 Self-serve libraries

Participants were unsure about self-serve libraries

Self-serve library facilities, which are listed as part of *Option 3 (recommended)* and *Option 3 as amended*, were discussed amongst participants. There was some negativity around the proposal of self-serve sites, as there was uncertainty amongst participants as to how they would be run and what services would be offered.

Is it self-service, the way you can go into an existing library and there are members of staff, but you can kind of access things yourself? Or is it an unstaffed building, an unmanned building?

<div align="right">Parents/carers group</div>

I think it seems like a bit of a cop out, because there's nothing to say here that they would improve anything. And it's interesting, the five self-serve sites, those are five quite deprived areas. And I think in the consultation from October, some feedback was that St James Library actually needs more security, because gangs of kids and stuff can be off-putting for people. So the fact that that's one that they've highlighted would be a self-serve non-staffed library is quite funny, I think.

Younger people group

I don't really know much about how that works.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

Concerns about antisocial behaviour at unstaffed sites and a need for security staff

There was significant concern that with no staff present, self-serve sites could become targets for antisocial behaviour and potentially deter people from using them, particularly those in vulnerable groups.

When it comes to self-serving, there's already a lack of staff so there might be a little bit more antisocial behaviour in an unstaffed library.

Secondary school pupil group

Hopefully people will use it well, but what's to say that you don't just get a load of drunk idiots coming in and smashing bottles everywhere and things? Would people feel safe using it? I don't know.

Parents/carers group

If they've got a security guard there, in some way, shape or form, to make people feel more secure. I think a lot of us, in the night time here, might think twice about coming in in the darkness on your own.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

Without staff, there was also a concern that books and other resources or equipment may get stolen or damaged.

That sounds a bit dodgy, doesn't it? You'd never get your books back!

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

If you've got an unmanned building, the computer is going to go on day one, isn't it?

Parents/carers group

Some people will struggle to use self-serve machines and would still need help from staff

There was a fear that some library users would not be able to use self-serve machines to borrow books and would rely upon help from library staff. If self-serve machines were introduced without staff present, some worried that it could be a barrier to using the library for some people.

I've got one concern, and that's regarding the self-service machines. Great, if you can work out how to use them nice and easily, but I know a lot of people who are not very tech savvy. A friend of mine, who I work with as well, she isn't tech savvy. If she wants to borrow a book and you present her with this self-service ticket machine, she will not know what she's doing. I'm sure she's not alone. I'm not quite sure how you would get around that, but if you can find a solution to that, then this option gets my support.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

I can use them [self-serve machines], they're pretty obvious, but there's still times where I've gone, 'Oh, this hasn't worked', and it's because the last person hasn't logged out and I've actually just put all their books onto my ticket. There's things like that.

Parents/carers group

I've not been to these other ones, but at St. James it's just part of another building, so it's inside like a kind of community centre. There's a café…I wonder if it's the same with these other ones, that it wouldn't just be an empty building for the library itself, there would be staff there.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

Library staff are trained and knowledgeable, and people benefit from this

Some users rely on staff at libraries to provide support to users, such as help with finding a book or research materials, and are a key part of the experience of visiting a library.

I feel like when you're in a library, the staff are kind of what makes it an enjoyable sort of place. When I was little, my mum used to take me to the library all the time and we'd do activities and get to know the people in the libraries. I still know the people there now. And I feel if it was self-serving, it might be easier but it's not as enjoyable.

Secondary school pupil group

For me personally, I use the staff in libraries a lot because I can't find the books, because I have terrible navigation. So I always have to ask.

Secondary school pupil group

You can ask a librarian and say, 'I've enjoyed this, is there anything similar?', and they will tell you. And I think that's such an art.

Older people group

The people who could really benefit, including a lot of mums with young kids, could do with the support and the signposting there. If I think about myself using the library, knowing what it's all about, I'm happy to walk in, get my books and go out again. I don't need it staffed personally, for me. But it seems like some of those self-serve sites in particular could be the ones where people are going to come in not knowing what's going on, a bit unsure about using the library. And having somebody there to help them out would be really key in retaining them.

Younger people group

Some participants are comfortable with the idea of self-serve sites, as self-serve technology is already widely used

However, in contrast to most participants, some did acknowledge that they were comfortable with the idea of self-serve sites, as they already use self-serve kiosks in libraries or had used self-service machines in other walks of life, such as supermarkets.

I'd say that wouldn't be so much of an impact. Because if you go in any of the libraries now, even in Birkenhead, a lot of it is self-service anyway because they have the machines. And yes, they do have staff there to help and kind of run it, but a lot of the actual checking in and out of books, even booking the computers and so on, is self-service. So I don't think that is would be a massive impact to develop that in Wirral.

Parents/carers group

I suppose it's like when it first happened in Asda with the self-service check outs, and you thought people are just gonna be robbing stuff, but they don't – well, some do! You've got cameras and CCTV nowadays and stuff. And you need a card to get through the door in the first place.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

3.7 Mobile library

Wirral Council is also considering the provision of a mobile library as part of its future operating model. Participants were provided with some background information as to how a mobile library might work and were asked for their opinions.

Requests for more information about a mobile library and how it would work

When asked their opinion about a mobile library, participants' reactions were mixed. Participants did, however, want more information on what it would be like, its size, how many books it would hold, how often it would visit places, what services would be available, and how wheelchair users would be able to access it.

> *The mobile library, obviously, that would have to be staffed. And how big is it going to be?*
>
> High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

> *Like everyone has said, it depends on how it would work. It's difficult, because it would be impossible to cater for people who don't work, people who work during the day, who would normally go to the library on a Saturday, kids who are in school…so it's going to be difficult for everybody to access, even if it is going geographically, because people might not always be available at 10 o'clock on a Tuesday, when it happens to arrive in the area.*
>
> Parents/carers group

> *The issue is that it's not been very well publicised of how it's going to function, because I don't think the council know how it's going to function…Where's it going to be? We don't know.*
>
> Friends of Library group

> *The mobile library is a good idea – providing it has enough books, providing it can operate a request system and an ordering system to allow you to get your book at the next visit, that would be great.*
>
> Disability/long-term health conditions group

Some participants also questioned how one mobile library would cover the whole of the Wirral and how long it would be able to spend at each location, and how frequently.

> *If it's just one mobile unit, then it's covering a huge area called 'Wirral'…To me, it's not a feasible option at all.*
>
> High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

> *The question I have is about the locations where it would go. Wirral is quite a big place, and this is only one thing that would be going around the whole of Wirral, so you would need to think about where it could physically go in a day, how many miles it could cover, how many hours it would spend in one place…But aside from that, I think it's a good idea.*
>
> Disability/long-term health conditions group

Some thought a mobile library was a good idea, with some saying they would use it

Some participants thought the introduction of a mobile library was a good idea and would provide a service to residents that may not be able to access a library in a building.

> *I think it's a good idea, because it still has a service for people who don't have a library any more. But I feel like maybe a problem is that it may not have as wide a range of books as you would think.*
>
> Secondary school pupil group

> *If people have got mobility problems, maybe that would mean they could still access a library. Whereas if their library closed and they had to get a couple of buses, then probably they wouldn't bother.*
>
> Older people group

> *I think, in concept, this is absolutely brilliant. How it actually works in a real-world situation, only time will tell. But this feels like a really good step forward. And when I say that, I mean that both financially, but more sort of technologically speaking. The options you've got now are go into a library or buy the book, or as an audio book, or whatever, whereas this is sort of the best of both worlds. It's that access, without having to go out and get another subscription service.*
>
> Disability/long-term health conditions group

Personally, I think it would be an interesting thing to see how it works. Obviously, there's a lot of logistics to work out, and it depends on how often they visit and things. But yeah, I would be interested to see how that works. I think if it was on a certain day then I would probably try to make it on that day, if it was in our area.

Parents/carers group

Better than no library access at all

Some participants were pragmatic about the possibility of a mobile library as they believed it would be better to have access to a mobile library than to not have access to a library at all if their local library was closed.

If the library was closed permanently, it'd be a lot better than nothing. I think, specifically for the people that I can envisage using it, I think these are the folk that are not working Monday to Friday, nine to five, for various reasons, either age, they're retired, or they're just not working for other reasons. But to give them the option of accessing some of these things, I think somehow rather than nothing…Whilst agreeing with all the kind of potential drawbacks that people have mentioned.

Parents/carers group

It's better than nothing, would be the honest answer. But it's how it would work, and that's the bit I don't understand. I used to take my little one when he was younger to the playgroup sessions and storytelling sessions at the libraries, and they would have Lego clubs and all that sort of thing. I can't envision that working.

Parents/carers group

Concern about access for disabled people, particularly wheelchair users

There was concern, however, about accessibility and the ease of use for older people and those who have a disability, particularly those who use a wheelchair. Participants asked fundamental questions such as what the available space in the mobile library would be for wheelchairs, particularly if it was busy, and how elderly residents would be able to get onto the bus if there were steps.

I also do think that it's discriminating against disabled people. I mean, a mobile library is not going to work if you're in a wheelchair. If you can get in there, okay, but once you're in there, you're taking up all the damn space! It's ludicrous. So they are discriminating against people with disabilities, whether they be learning disabilities or physical disabilities, and again, I don't think they've even thought about that group.

Friends of Library group

I like the idea of a mobile library, but my concern would be if somebody is in a wheelchair. Would the vehicle be accessible for them to get on and off it?...Because it's not fair to that person who turns up to the mobile library and then finds that he or she can't get on the thing.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

Will there be 'sufficient space' for me [a wheelchair user] to move around? You need a turning circle of 150cm in a building. You can't provide that on a bus. Not a bus that's been fitted out with bookshelves as well.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

Some participants were also concerned about a mobile library becoming too busy and overcrowded, with some voicing their concerns about COVID-19 risks.

It might be that you'd have to wait outside because it's too full. And people are still very cautious about COVID even now, and people will probably be frightened to be in a confined space.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

The other thing as well is space for people to move inside. How many people at a time – two? Once it's shelved out, it's probably not going to be a lot of space.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

Good promotion and reliability are key

It was highlighted by some participants that a mobile library would need to be well promoted and all users made aware of the stops and times. It was also stressed that a mobile library would need to be reliable in terms of being in the right place at the advertised times, or users would lose faith in it and stop using the service.

The other thing with a mobile library, as well, is it needs to have a timetable and it needs to be reliable, so that people know, 'Oh, it's three o'clock on a Tuesday, the library will be here shortly'. It's no good it just turning up randomly whenever it feels like it.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

It would have to be a really reliable service, and something that people can plan around and know exactly when it was going to be in their area, so they could return their books. And I think just make people know about it, if they're going to have something like that, so that people can make the most of it and give it a go. Because if it's something that is only advertised in the libraries currently, it's probably not something I'd hear about. So yeah, just having a really clear schedule, and it being a reliable service, and then I think it would be really, really useful.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

Concern that it would not carry a sufficient range of books

Whilst some participants were keen to find out more about mobile library provision, some participants were concerned that, due to size constraints it would not be able to carry a large number of books and, would therefore, only provide a limited range, which would not meet everyone's needs.

I don't think mobile libraries would carry enough books to make it interesting for people.

Older people group

You still need the space to store all these books…You still need physical space to store enough books, to be able to rotate them.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

Space for digital services

Due to the perceived likely size of a mobile library, participants also believed there would not be enough space for computers and printing facilities that are currently offered in libraries. Furthermore, there was some scepticism that it would provide reliable free Wi-Fi.

The mobile bus won't have computers.

Friends of Library group

Things like where it's talking about Wi-Fi, or the possibility of looking into it, it's not even not saying that they'd have that. So if it's going to areas where people need the library for IT services or things like that, or going on to the computers, and it hasn't been hasn't got that option. I can't see that working.

Parents/carers group

I wonder if with the mobile library…would they then also have the other services there? Would they have printers and things? Because I know people who go just to type up their CVs or print things, if they don't have their own printers.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

Space for community groups and events

One important aspect of current libraries mentioned by participants was the provision of meeting spaces for community groups or community events. They questioned whether a mobile library would be able to provide the same resource, due to its size and availability.

I don't see how a van is ever going to replace a community space. I think that's what we're fighting for. Once these spaces are gone, it's unlikely you get them back.

Parents/carers group

Where does the Lego club go? Where does the Rhyme Time inside a van? Where do the newspapers with the comfy chairs go that lonely older people come to, whenever the library's open and sit for an hour, and maybe meet the only other person in the day? It can't be done.

Friends of Library group

I don't know how big they are to be honest. Like if it's a tour bus, then you can fit some space on those things. But I'm thinking of just a normal kind of bus…If you've got some books on and a printer and a scanner, it doesn't feel like it would have room for people to move around. It doesn't feel like there's room for kind of a group of people to kind of sit in and sing nursery rhymes as well. But I don't know.

Parents/carers group

Concern about costs, with some feeling that costs associated with a mobile library service could be better spent elsewhere

Although there were some positive comments about a mobile library, there was concern about the cost of its purchase and creation, in addition to the ongoing management and maintenance costs. Some participants questioned if the money used on the mobile library could be spent better elsewhere within the library service, such as being used to keep a few other libraries open.

Have you seen the cost over five years?...If you look in the report and add up the initial costs of the purchase of the vans, and then the ongoing cost per year for maintaining them and staffing them, it comes to half a million over five years. So it's one of those things that again, will look good, councillors will go, 'Oh, well, you know, people in Bromborough will have this van that's going to stop outside every door, and they'll be fine'. And it's a smokescreen. In talking to people at public meetings, it is coming back as an item that people don't see.

Friends of Library group

I don't see anyone using it at all, to be honest. I just think it's a total waste of money. I mean, how much would this cost to set up?

Older people group

I think the money should be used to revisit the libraries for closure and see what you can do to stop some of this disenfranchisement of certain areas. To look back and see what would happen if you use that money to keep libraries open.

Friends of Library group

Mobile libraries and other mobile services work well elsewhere

Some participants cited other mobile libraries that they knew of working well elsewhere, including one in Liverpool. One participant highlighted the mobile banks that visit remote areas.

The Liverpool City Council one is a big single level – like a big RV, in a way. I've not been inside it, I've just seen it on the move.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

When I had my first child I lived near Wigan, and the mobile library came once a fortnight. And it was brilliant, it really was.

Older people group

I think this is good. Mobile libraries work well throughout the country generally anyway. A friend of ours is a librarian in the Cotswolds, and they have a big mobile service there, and I know that they work throughout the country.

Disability/long-term health conditions group

Mobile libraries more suited for rural areas

Some participants thought that mobile libraries were more suited to rural areas where they have worked really well as residents are not able to travel long distances to get to a library. They believed that Wirral was largely a built-up area and thus did not need a mobile library.

We have raised it and people have said, 'Oh, but there are other parts of the country where it works really well'. Great. Where are they? Norfolk. In rural areas, it works brilliantly where it would take you an hour to get to a town. Brilliant. They can't come up with an urban, or semi-urban, comparator where it's working successfully. Cheshire East is the nearest comparator, and Cheshire East does not have major conurbations. It's much more a series of small towns.

Friends of Library group

It's good for rural areas.

Older people group

Uncertainty about how partnership organisations, such as the NHS would fit in with a mobile library, but it could partner well with schools

Commenting on the information that was provided in the focus groups about a potential mobile library service, some participants were unsure how the partnership organisations such as the NHS would fit in with the management of mobile library service.

Have they negotiated with the NHS, schools and community groups? Or is this something that's just nicely written down? Because the NHS is totally strapped for cash, and I can't see how that is going to be supporting a mobile library.

Older people group

What I'm not too keen on is there's a lot of noise at the bottom for me, around that partnership with the NHS and whatever organisations are said there. I don't know what that means. It just feels like some big names have been thrown in to kind of add a bit more weight to it. Because what is partnering up with the NHS to do with libraries?

Parents/carers group

In terms of it linking with education and things, it just occurred to me if they did it something like where it came to visit schools, and stayed after school…If it came at the end of the day so the children could go in…I don't know how it would work, but that's one thing in terms of partnership, from a teacher point of view. I know they've got some schools that do something similar, either they've got libraries or people come in. That, I think, would be a good way that it could work, that for children who wouldn't normally necessarily go to a library, the library comes to them.

Parents/carers group

3.8   Additional comments from participants

Communication with Friends groups
Participants in the Friends of Library focus group and some participants in the older people group that were also members of a Friends of a Library group wanted to see more communication from the council, as they felt there had been a lack of information and dialogue during the last two years. Individuals spoke about some of the work they had done as a Friend of a Library, such as volunteering and taking part in activities such as fundraising. They were very keen on restoring dialogue with the council library service to discuss issues such as returning to libraries and their involvement in the consultation about the future of the library service.

Our biggest problem is communication with the library management, which quite frankly, is non-existent.

Friends of Library group

There used to be a forum where Friends groups could get together with library services and discuss emerging issues. And we've had no opportunities presented to us to meet and discuss what's going on. I've tried to get in touch with people, but not very successfully.

Friends of Library group

Nobody will meet us. We're having meetings and there's no representation from the council, so we're just talking among ourselves and what we think we should do, what should happen.

Friends of Library group

Presumably you are picking up from this the tremendous sense of anger, of disrespect we're feeling, having been groups that are allegedly working closely with library services and developing our libraries, and then suddenly...Nobody is talking to us, nobody wants us. Nobody even wants to get us back into the libraries now they're open…It's just so disrespectful. The only conclusion you can come to is that there is something underlying going on, which is that the decision has already been made, this is all lip service, and they couldn't speak to anyone because they might be asked questions they can't answer.

Friends of Library group

We are the Friends, and we work hard, and we put on things, and we raise money. But we're not treated as volunteers, so we don't get any volunteer training from the council. We don't get that sort of back up and support from the council. We don't want to volunteer to be librarians, but we want to volunteer to be community builders.

Older people group

There is a need for more consultation, such as public forums and further promotion to non-users who may be unaware the libraries are at risk of closure
Some participants wanted to see further consultation about the future of the service, including public forum events or pop-up events, which would allow residents to question council staff and councillors about the proposed options and have constructive dialogue about the future of the service.

Wouldn't it be better to go around different libraries [and have] public meetings where West Kirby can have their say, Wallasey can have their say…And then put it all together and see…Like a pop-up show one day a week in different areas so people can have their say.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

It needs to be made aware to people that perhaps don't use the library very often that it's in danger.

High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

There may be some consultation fatigue amongst residents of the borough
Participants, particularly from the Friends of Library focus group, spoke of consultation fatigue. Some had actively tried to encourage library users to participate in the survey, but had had feedback from residents that they had participated in the first consultation and did not want to spend time completing another survey.

From memory, and it could be ten or fifteen years ago, Wirral Council tried to close all the libraries, and the government stepped in and said, 'No, you can't do that', and they had to rethink. And that's why we're still talking about libraries 12, 15 years later.

Friends of Library group

My own view is that we'll be talking about this in another five years' time.

Friends of Library group

Can I just can I just say something about the consultation online? We are finding, as I say, we've been out canvassing, we've got quite a big petition going, and in the public meetings, we're finding resistance from people to filling it in. Because they've done it before. We asked them in 2016, and people are saying, 'Not again, there's no point, nothing comes of it'.

Friends of Library group

The whole thing is just regurgitating the same information time after time. I just get the impression, 'We haven't got the right answers, so let's have another go and see if we can get a better answer'…People get fed up in the end.

Friends of Library group

Feeling that the council has already made up its mind and that the consultation is just lip service

There was a feeling amongst some participants that the decision had already been made as to which option would be adopted and how many libraries would be closed, so some would feel there was little point in participating in the consultation.

There are reports that the council have already decided to close eight libraries. Now, whether this is true or not, or just rumour…But it's been reported, which rather makes all this consultation out of step.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

I think really this is a council ploy. Because then they can say less and less people are using the libraries. So I think it's quite obviously deliberate. If they're not giving out the information [that libraries have reopened] then people won't know when they're open, they won't know what times they're open. And this all goes along the council's predetermined plan that they will close libraries. They want to close libraries.

High deprivation area group (Seacombe)

They look on libraries as an easy target. They always have done.

Friends of Library group

You know what they're going to do. They're going to knock the whole lot down, aren't they?

Older people group

Some distrust of council motives for closing libraries

Following the previous concern that the decision had already been made about the closure of libraries, it was apparent that some harboured a distrust of the council and its motives for closing libraries. There was concern that the council wanted to sell or re-develop library buildings to generate income.

What are they going to do with the libraries when they're closed? Are they going to sell them? Sell the land for building? So they're not only going to save money, they're going to make money as well.

Friends of Library group

If they close libraries then they need to make money from this closed building…We've seen schools that have been closed that have stood empty for years and years and years, and it ends up still costing the council money. So if you close the library, what are you going to do with it?

Older people group

I don't want them to close it, and then it just becomes a derelict space. That would be even worse.
Parents/carers group

Council has a duty/statutory responsibility to provide library services

Previously, a number of years ago, when Wirral Council had tried to close libraries there was a public enquiry, and it was ruled that the council could not continue with its previous proposals. It was felt amongst some participants that Wirral Council needs to ensure that it is meeting its statutory responsibility and obligations with these proposed options, given the previous mistakes made.

We had a public enquiry which discovered that the council were wrong, that they were breaking the law, of the Library Act. And they had to step back, so we got libraries opened again. But they now, of course, are covering themselves, because they're leaving open the four main libraries, one of which is in each constituency area. So, they are following the letter of the law –but it's not what Andrew Carnegie would have liked.
Friends of Library group

Do they have an obligation to provide some sort of library service, then?...Hence the mobile library service being maintained. I'm not saying it shouldn't be maintained, that's good. But it sounds as though they're giving you something, when they're obliged to provide something. Because I know they do have statutory obligations in certain areas.
High deprivation area group (Rock Ferry)

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on Enventure Research's interpretation of the consultation programme findings and do not necessarily reflect the view of Wirral Council.

1. **The Council should implement Option 3 (recommended option)**
   Option 3 (recommended option) was the most popular option in the survey. In the focus groups participants were keen to save Greasby and Rock Ferry Libraries (as listed in Option 3 (as amended)), however, it was clear that respondents just wanted to keep as many libraries open as possible, no matter which libraries they were.

2. **Ensure that whichever option is implemented, a comprehensive, efficient and accessible library service is provided across the whole of the borough**
   Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 Wirral Borough Council has a statutory duty 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' in the borough. Focus group participants felt strongly that the service should be accessible to everyone, regardless of where they live.

3. ***Option 1* and *Option 2* should not be considered any further, as they will not provide a comprehensive and accessible library service across the borough**
   Much smaller proportions supported *Option 1* and *Option 2* compared with *Option 3 (recommended option)* and *Option 3 as amended* in the survey. In addition, larger proportions thought these options would have negative impacts on service provision across the borough and for them and their household than positive. Many in the focus groups did not believe that *Option 1* and *Option 2* would provide a comprehensive and accessible service to everyone in the borough.

4. **The Council should be considerate towards any of the affected groups for whichever option is implemented**
   Some groups were more likely to say that *Option 3 (recommended option)* would have an *overall negative impact* for them and their household in the survey:
   o Females (compared with males)
   o Those aged 45-64 and 65+ (compared with 25-44 year olds and 16-24 year olds)
   o Those living in Wirral West compared with those in other areas
   o Those in areas of lower deprivation compared with those living in areas of higher deprivation

   Focus group participants also felt that people from deprived areas would be most impacted if their local library closed as they would not have the means to access books and other reading materials, and also highlighted that those who relied on public transport or walking as a means of transport would be more affected.

5. **As well as providing access to books and the spoken word, the Council should ensure that self-serve sites provide other facilities, such as digital services, and rooms for groups and organisations to use, and that they continue to be a safe space, retaining library staff at least for a limited time**
   Some focus group participants used services such as photocopying and printing, the computers and access to the internet, and they would still want these to be provided at self-serve sites. Some participants highlighted that libraries were not just about borrowing books, but were also places that could be used for events, and community groups. It was also stressed that libraries are safe spaces for people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, and safety concerns were expressed in relation to self-serve libraries, which could become targets for antisocial behaviour.

   Focus group participants were also concerned that some people might not be able to use the self-serve machines and suggested that library staff would be needed at least in the first few months of opening to be on hand to help those who struggled to scan their books.

6. **A mobile library should be considered in areas where there will be no library building to ensure those areas have continued access**

   There was some appetite amongst survey respondents for using a mobile library if it was implemented, particularly amongst younger people, and some in the focus groups said they might try it if their local library was no longer open.

7. **A mobile library should include digital services, activities and events related to library services, Story Time, council information and other services, and a Click and Collect service**

   When asked what other services they would like to see on a mobile library (in addition to the core library service), digital services was most common in the survey, followed by activities and events related to library services, Story Time, council information and other services, and Click and Collect. For those aged 16-24, digital services was the most common service requested for a mobile library.

8. **A mobile library should be accessible for people who have disabilities**

   A concern was expressed in the focus groups that a mobile library would not be accessible to wheelchair users, and it was highlighted that a mobile library would need to be a very wide vehicle to be accessible.

9. **Consideration should be made to open remaining libraries Monday to Saturday, and mornings and afternoons where feasible**

   When asked which day of the week and time of day they would most prefer to use a library, all mornings and afternoons Monday to Saturday were selected by sizeable proportions of library service users in the survey. Focus group participants felt that the library service should be accessible to everyone, including those who work full-time and therefore opening six days a week would meet this requirement.

10. **Promote the library service more to encourage usage across the borough, which could positively improve literacy levels, social mobility and alleviate loneliness**

    Focus group participants thought that the council did not widely promote the library service, leaving many across the borough unaware of what it offers. It was suggested that it could be more widely promoted through social media and local media. Participants highlighted the positive impact that libraries can have on mental wellbeing, loneliness and literacy levels and also held the perception that many people did not know that libraries had reopened following closures due to the pandemic. When asked in the survey for more comments about the proposed options, a common theme was that libraries should be promoted more or greater use of them encouraged.

11. **Review the service provision for younger people to ensure it appeals and to encourage usage**

    It was suggested in the focus groups that the library service offering could be tailored to appeal more to younger people, particularly teenagers, through providing facilities to socialise with friends, play games or watch films, and generally ensuring that libraries provide welcoming safe spaces for them.

12. **Work more closely with Friends of Libraries groups**

    Participants in the Friends of Libraries group suggested that closer partnership working with Friends groups would be beneficial to the service, as they could help raise funds and support the service.