

## Mobile Library

In relation to the proposed preferred option (Option 3) Wirral's Library Service will commit to invest in a brand new, electric mobile library which will provide a flexible and scalable service to Wirral residents. Current market research and modelling suggests a 7.5t Iveco Daily van (ranging from 4 to 7 metre lengths) will be sufficient with space for 3000 books, digital provision (e.g., computers, printing, copying etc.), and enough space for people to comfortably move around. The mobile library will be supplemented with a roof mounted solar panel to ensure its footprint is minimal. Generally, a mobile library will be fully customisable ensuring that disabled and ramp access is incorporated as well as any other design and access features that allow for equality of use. The forthcoming consultation on the proposals for a new library model will be used to gain feedback and ideas on any other design features for the mobile library. The images below are indicative of what this model of van could look like.





## Opportunities

The mobile library is a key supporting mitigating factor for the preferred option and provides opportunities for an enhanced provision. As well as a core library offer (free access to books and printed material) the intention is to provide digital provision such as I.T., printing and copying facilities, and to explore the feasibility of roaming Wi-Fi. The service will be supplemented by a programme of outreach work supported by a core team of Strategic Librarians. This will build on the existing and new partnership opportunities both internally and externally to deliver outreach and events that provide additional outcomes and value to having a mobile provision in Wirral. For example:

- NHS and CCG partners - to provide outreach such as baby weighing, engagement and information events, and offering free equipment (all observed in other authorities).
- Schools – providing themed visits, storytelling, authors, and **bringing the service to them** to encourage and engage children and young people with independent reading and to support literacy.
- Community Groups/Venues – enhance provision at community run or managed libraries (TBC), community centres, day centres and other community venues, supermarkets, care homes, hospitals, offices etc.
- Local events and activities – bringing the mobile library to events in parks, school fairs, sporting events, and community events. Targeting high footfall/traffic events to engage as many people as possible.
- Library Events – dependant on conditions and available space, the service could extend outside of the mobile library for events traditionally held in a physical building such bounce and rhyme, reading groups, and reading challenges that could provide a unique and diverse setting for those engaged.
- One Stop Shops – libraries have long been a first line of information for other Council services, and this will be explored for the mobile library.

- Order & Collect – we know from the consultation that library opening times may not be conducive for many people's lives and schedules and the feasibility of offering a click and collect service where people could order books and collect from a scheduled stop and at a time suitable for them will be explored.

In addition to partnership work, the mobile library will act as a marketing tool for Wirral's Library service as it moves around the borough. It can also act as a conduit between the Council and engaged residents to provide up to date information and advice.

## **Locations**

The locations have been initially set against those libraries where a closure or community managed/owned library is being proposed. This does not mean the mobile library will simply station outside of a vacant library building. It does mean that locations within that local community will be considered based on demand, need and the impact it can have. For example, the mobile library may visit community centres, shopping centres, schools, residential areas, and/or car parks of local supermarkets. It will also be possible to incorporate areas of the borough that have previously been a significant distance from any library or had no provision at all (e.g. Thornton Hough). The frequency of visits will be determined via a number of sources primarily through existing use, performance and opening hours, the forthcoming consultation, emerging demand as the service is rolled out, and based on performance and uptake monitoring after the first 12 months.

The added benefit is that the mobile library will deliver on the Council's statutory functions to engage as many children, young people and adults as possible by bringing the service to them in a means that is most suitable.

## **Purchase and Running Costs**

Based on market research and recent purchases from other authorities the cost will be c.£213k with a minimum revenue provision and interest of c.£24k (annual repayments over 10 years).

Discussions with other local authorities has suggest that the mobile library can be run by one library assistant (dual role). This has been set at Band E based on mobile library roles in other authorities (£22k). In addition, the annual running costs for a mobile library is c.£16k based on other authorities.

For the purposes of modelling the ongoing costs and associated savings with the preferred option (Option 3), an ongoing cost of £62k has already been factored in to account for the above. Additional capital may be required to provide the necessary infrastructure for electric charging which will be factored in once known.