

Okehampton Town Council
15th December 2025
Meeting Report

Date:	8 th December 2025
Name:	Emma James

10.6 Library Consultation – To note a [consultation](#) which closes on 22nd February 2026 and can be responded to by Councillors as individuals.

Devon residents invited to have their say on future of libraries

Devon County Council (DCC) is asking residents to help shape the future of the county's 50 libraries, as a major 12-week public consultation opens today (Monday).

From Monday 1 December people across Devon will be able to give their views on proposals to reduce and 'standardise' opening hours and options to extend opening hours through additional volunteering by using technology and the potential introduction of community managed libraries.

The consultation will also include a dedicated survey for children - there are currently more than 113,000 active registered library users in Devon and 28 per cent of those are children (under 16), the single largest group.

No libraries will close under the proposals.

Devon currently has 50 council-commissioned libraries, run by the charity Libraries Unlimited, alongside a Home Library Service and outreach programmes.

Together, they welcomed 2.6 million visits last year and hosted more than 14,000 events, ranging from children's story sessions to digital skills workshops.

The consultation comes as the authority faces mounting financial pressures which means that the council must now look at how services are delivered.

The library service budget has been reduced year on year, and whilst efficiency savings have been made the current model is no longer sustainable.

And although digital borrowing of e-books, audiobooks and e-magazines has grown, physical book borrowing is below pre-pandemic levels.

Residents will be able to view the proposals for their local library and will be asked whether they support plans for 'standardised' staffed hours.

Currently each library has its own individual opening hours – under the proposals we are looking to group a number of libraries together within an area, and each area will have at least one library open Monday to Saturday.

DCC is also seeking views on the use of volunteers and community managed libraries, where local organisations could take on day-to-day running with support from the authority and Libraries Unlimited.

This happens in Cornwall where four out of the county's libraries are maintained by the council, with 27 run by local community groups, town and parish councils.

Other proposals include the use of new technology such as 'Open Access' systems which would allow registered users to enter libraries outside staffed times.

Councillor Cheryl Cottle Hunkin, Cabinet Member for Libraries, said: "Devon's libraries are trusted spaces at the heart of our communities, and we remain committed to keeping all 50 libraries open. As the way people use libraries continues to change, this consultation is an important chance to rethink and update the service, so it better reflects how people use libraries now and how they hope to use them in the future.

"By making sensible use of new technology, we can support libraries to develop further as community hubs, giving local people and organisations more opportunities to make good use of their library spaces. We've seen this technology used successfully in other parts of the country to extend opening hours, improve access, and offer more flexibility for residents.

"We've also looked at how other authorities, such as Lincolnshire and Cornwall, manage a mix of council-run and community-led libraries to help inform our thinking.

"This consultation will play a key role in shaping the long-term future of the library service, and we want to hear directly from everyone - residents, young people, library users and community groups so we can work together on a sustainable future for Devon's libraries."

Alex Kittow, the Chief Executive of Libraries Unlimited, said: "Libraries are absolutely vital community spaces offering everything from books to blood pressure monitors, repair cafes to baby weighing, community fridges to low-cost cinema and much more besides.

"Crucially they are spaces to come and be and connect with others, where everyone is welcome and it doesn't cost any money to join. Our responsibility is to protect these spaces and ensure they continue to exist long into the future. This consultation offers a way to do this, and we encourage everyone to have their say."

The consultation runs until Sunday February 22 2026. Forms can be completed [online](#), at local libraries, or returned by post.

There is also a survey available for younger library users aged 13 to 17. All responses will be reviewed before revised proposals are presented to Cabinet in spring 2026.

11. Town Transport Services – To consider reports from councillors, including from Cllr Ireland that the 317 bus route be modified to include stops at Waitrose and the Railway Station, and from Cllr Cummings

Thoughts on future bus services for Okehampton (Cllr Cummings)

I have been giving the opening of the Okehampton Interchange Station and the how the bus services would work serving both Okehampton stations.

Already we are seeing a change in the services regarding the transfer of the Stage Coach 6a Exeter to Okehampton service via Tedburn St Mary and the return journey being stopped and a new company delivering this service (Dartline), this does have some benefits as I understand they are starting earlier and operating a two hourly service but I await the timetable to confirm this.

At a recent meeting I attended the Manager from Devon County Council stated that they were currently investigating the Okehampton to Tavistock 118 service and it servicing the interchange station. At this meeting I suggested that if this service was to leave the West Street stop and continue up East Street and Exeter Road turning into Bear down Road, then in to Hamble down Road down to the New Station and drop off any passengers and pick up any wishing to use this service, then leave and travel down Kellands Lane and onto Nexus Way turning left at the roundabout on Crediton Road following the road down to the Link Road Roundabout, turning right on to the link road and stopping at the hospital and then continuing on its normal route back to Tavistock.

It would be nice to see bus stops installed along the roads with no bus stops especially by St James School to allow customers to join the route from the new estate, and Crediton Road this would provide revenue for the service and provide a circular hourly service for the Towns residents.

It would also be good to see the 317 Okehampton to Bideford service follow its normal route and turn in Moyses Meadow, but then leave Moyses Meadow and drive through the Town on the same route as previously mentioned for the 118 service, this again would provide a circular service from one end of the Town to other end of the town and catch a train from the new station.

It is my believe that having all the bus services attend both stations would add to the congestion in town and make achieving the timetables harder for all the services. Therefore I believe that the services that supply Launceston and Bude continue to serve just the original station. I also believe that a circular service connecting Sampford Courney, North Tawton, South Zeal and Sticklepath and providing a circular service around the town would be of great support to the communities wishing to visit Okehampton and use the rail services.

I hope I have written this in such away that people understand my thoughts, I like many others would like to see better provision of bus services that link the two Rail Stations and provide a service linking the out lying areas of the town easier for all to use.

Something that came from the meeting I was at with xxxxxxxxxxxx, Devon County Council are waiting for the funding arrangements for the next year to be released before they can decide on routes to serve the new station and possibly many other routes across the County. It was announced that there are only four routes in the whole County that are self funding without a subsidy from DCC.