

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
13th July 2017**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Rachel Powell, Portfolio Holder for Children's Youth, Libraries and Leisure Services on behalf of the Leader

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe

Question

I along with local residents am pleased to see the council is revisiting decisions on waste recycling centres and parking. Will the Leader of the Council be open to discussions on revisiting the Library reduction in hours policy were communities can show the wider impact on council services if there is a reduction in hours?

Answer

Powys County Council and the Library Service is very open to any innovative proposals and discussions which can help to sustain or increase library opening hours for residents to benefit from a whole range of resources and facilities, whilst still enabling the service to achieve their budgetary savings target for 2018/19, under the medium term financial strategy. This policy of community conversations was approved by informal Cabinet in Feb 2016, and has borne great fruit in sustaining valued local libraries. Successful partnership working in communities such as Llanidloes, Llanfair Caereinion and Crickhowell for example have enabled local savings targets to be already met in those areas, with very minimal disruption to the service users, and the service is grateful to the communities for their support.

In Hay in particular, the service is very willing to working with the Town Council, Hay-on-Wye Library Supporters group and the wider community of Hay on Wye in order to achieve the best possible outcome for local residents using the town's library for a wide variety of purposes, including accessing other council services. For some time, there has been a firm proposal to work with the Schools Service, to reduce premises costs through co-locating the library with a brand new facility in the new primary school. This proposal has many advantages, not least the proximity of easily accessible disabled car parking, and the facility for the pupils and their families to have ready access to the library, to boost reading and library use. It builds on

successful partnership working with schools and the Schools Service, in Llanwrtyd and Crickhowell, and the model is being duplicated in the new Ysgol Mynydd Du, for the benefit of Talgarth and Bronllys residents.

Although plans are well developed, the primary school co-location does not rule out further discussion around Hay Library, and the community has a further period, until 31st December 2017, to put forward fully costed proposals to sustain or develop the library, either in its current location or at the new primary school, whilst also achieving the local saving target. This would build on the generous support already given by Hay Festival to maintain local opening hours since 1st April 2015, and we look forward to hearing about the innovative partnership proposals which are sure to emerge from such a creative town.