

## **West Cheshire Museums and Libraries Consultation 2024**

### **What the consultation is about:**

Cheshire West and Chester Council delivers libraries and museums services across the whole of the borough. These services are open to all and are well-used by our communities every day.

The Council wants to continue to deliver a modern, accessible and sustainable library and museums service that reflects and supports the needs of our residents and visitors.

To achieve this, we have developed some principles to guide how libraries and museums services are delivered in the future. We are also considering making some changes to the opening hours of libraries and museums to ensure consistency across the borough and that each local area has access to library services throughout the week.

We want to understand the views of service users, residents and stakeholders about these proposals. This feedback is important to us to help inform any changes and ensure that we continue to deliver responsive services that provide value for money.

### **Background and context:**

The Council wants to continue to deliver excellent libraries and museums services that residents want to use and that enrich residents' lives. However, like other councils, Cheshire West and Chester Council is facing increasing pressures on services and budgets. This means we need to take a fresh approach to the way we deliver services to make sure we are prioritising funding where it can have the greatest impact.

The Council is therefore trying to find cost-effective solutions, which will still enable libraries and museums to continue delivering excellent services to residents.

### **About museums in Cheshire West and Chester**

West Cheshire Museums is a group of four sites which exist to 'preserve, document, and engage with the history and heritage of the region, its people and their stories'.

The four sites are:

- Grosvenor Museum, Chester
- Lion Salt Works, Northwich
- Weaver Hall Museum and Workhouse, Northwich
- Stretton Watermill, Chester

There are also three off-site Museum stores which house collections not on permanent public display. These collections are used in temporary exhibitions, for research and to improve future access through digitisation of collections.

West Cheshire Museums curate over one million unique objects through a programme of exhibitions, digital access and events. Nearly 79,000 people visited West Cheshire Museums in 2022/23 and a further 97,000 engaged with us digitally.

West Cheshire Museums encourage residents to use the museums for learning, reflection, communication and inspiration through an engagement programme including: Little Lions (Under-fives learning in a natural environment); Meet and Make (supporting People living with Dementia and their families); Young Producers, Young Directors and placements (creating 'live' opportunities for 13 to 25-year-olds); family activities and events.

The service delivers talks on collections and local history; mentors developing artists in 'Art School'; hosts emerging artist exhibitions and crafting sessions to enhance exhibitions in Café Crafts. It hosts and supports the Salt Works Sessions folk nights and partners with Vivo Care Choices who deliver café catering training for Adults with Learning Disabilities. It delivers schools sessions to 20,000 school pupils a year covering historical periods from Pre-history to World War II and additional sessions exploring Rivers and STEM.

### **Principles for museums**

To ensure museums continue to have a positive impact on resident's lives in the borough, we have created some principles for West Cheshire Museums. We will use these principles to manage and develop the service in future and want to hear residents' views on them. These principles outline how our museums will collect, preserve, document and interpret the Council's Museum collections and make them accessible to members of the public by:

- Developing inclusive and accessible exhibitions for residents to take part in, learn from and enjoy.
- Increasing access and the understanding of collections via digitisation, research and study, community engagement and partnerships.
- Offering a wide range of regular collections-based activities which provide access to cultural and creative opportunities.
- Making sure museum buildings are fit for purpose for museum collections and public access.
- Working with partner services and organisations to ensure value for money and increase access and reach a wider audience.
- Ensuring skilled teams can support visitors and collections and provide opportunities for volunteering across the service.
- Adopting sustainable practices wherever possible and exploring ways to generate more income to support service delivery.

### **Opening hours for museums**

The Council would like to maintain consistent access to museums at times residents want to use them and has proposed some changes to opening hours to enable this. The proposed changes have been designed using usage data and local knowledge to ensure that an excellent museums service continues to be available to residents.

Museums	Proposed change	Proposed change
Grosvenor Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday to Friday – no change to opening times</li> <li>• Saturday open at 11am rather than 10.30am and close at 4pm rather than 5pm.</li> <li>• Sunday open at 11am rather than 1pm.</li> </ul>	+0.5 hours
Lion Salt Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday to Friday – no change to opening times</li> <li>• Saturday and Sunday open at 11am rather than 10.30am and close at 4pm rather than 5pm.</li> </ul>	-3 hours
Weaver Hall Museum and Workhouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday no change to opening times</li> <li>• Tuesdays to Fridays open at 11am rather than 10am and close at 4pm rather than 5pm.</li> <li>• Weekends open at 12pm rather than 2pm and close at 4pm rather than 5pm.</li> </ul>	-6 hours
Stretton Watermill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change to the days this site is open</li> <li>• April and September weekends open from 12pm till 4pm rather than 1pm to 5pm.</li> <li>• May to August open Thursday to Sunday from 12pm till 4pm rather than from 1pm to 5pm.</li> </ul>	0 hours

You can find out more details about the current and proposed opening hours for each museum in the appendices of the consultation document, pages 8 and 9, or you can find them on our consultation webpage here: [www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/librariesandmuseums](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/librariesandmuseums). This information is available in standard and web accessible formats.

## **About libraries in Cheshire West and Chester**

There are 22 libraries in the borough, as well as a mobile library which serves rural areas, and a volunteer staffed Home Library Service which provides books to people who cannot visit the library.

Libraries vary in size and focus and are responsive to their community need. Ranging from busy Central Libraries such as Storyhouse and Northwich to well used Town and Neighbourhood libraries such as Frodsham and Upton, and smaller Community offers like Tarvin.

Some libraries loan a high number of books as people continue to use libraries in a more traditional way, whereas other libraries have a huge impact in their communities by offering support and activities to improve residents' lives.

In addition to providing access to books and reading, libraries also support residents with digital access and access to information. They improve residents' health and wellbeing with social and educational activities and by providing a warm, safe space for people to relax in. They also provide access to culture and creativity in our communities with a wide range of events throughout the year.

The library service works with multiple partners across Cheshire West and Chester and provides access points to the Council in communities across the borough. Library services are not only limited to buildings, with regular outreach activities happening across schools and children's centres as well.

## **Principles for libraries**

In order to ensure libraries continue to have a positive impact on residents' lives in Cheshire West and Chester, we have created some principles for Library Services. We will use these principles to manage and develop the service in future and want to hear residents' views on them. These principles form the 'Libraries First' approach and ensure that our libraries will:

- Be used as the first port of call to deliver Council and partner programmes, services, and information. Provide access points to information in residents' communities.
- Be well located in communities, in accessible, fit for purpose and well-maintained modern buildings. Where possible buildings will be shared with other services/organisations to ensure value for money, increase access and to reach a wider audience.
- Provide access to services outside of buildings via the Mobile Library, the Home Library Service and outreach work.
- Be staffed by skilled library teams who can support and empower residents to access the wide range of services available and signpost to other services.
- Support volunteering opportunities to provide skills and development opportunities in communities.
- Offer a wide range of up-to-date book stock in printed form and via a free online eBook, eAudiobook, eNewspaper and eMagazine offer. They also provide free access to trusted online resources.

- Provide digital access to users via up-to-date computers with printing and scanning services and access to free Wi-Fi. Skilled staff will support residents to improve their digital skills.
- Work with partners to offer a wide range of activities and events for all ages, daily, weekly and across the year. These events will support literacy and reading, improve digital and information skills, contribute to improved health and wellbeing and provide access to cultural and creative opportunities to enrich residents' lives.

### Opening hours for libraries

We would like to maintain consistent access to libraries at times residents want to use them and have proposed some changes to opening hours to enable this. The proposed changes have been designed using usage data and local knowledge to ensure that an excellent library service continues to be available to residents.

The proposed opening hours for the 22 libraries in the borough are guided by the following principles:

Library opening hours should:

- Be consistent across each size of library; we classify our libraries from largest to smallest as Central, Town, Neighbourhood and Community Libraries
- Be planned across each geographical area to allow maximum access with nearby libraries opening different days and evenings
- Have consistent opening patterns that make sense to users and allow residents to understand when they will be open
- Where possible include evening and weekend opening as well as daytime and weekday opening

Under these proposals all 22 libraries and the mobile library will remain open. However, most libraries will have some changes to their opening hours, increasing in some cases, changing in some cases and reducing in other cases. Overall, the proposals represent a 6% reduction in opening hours across all sites.

Chester Area	Proposed change	Proposed change
Blacon Library	Open at 9:30am each day instead of 9am. Open until 6pm Wednesday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-2.5 hours
Chester Library at Storyhouse	No change	0 hours
Great Boughton Library	Open until 7pm Monday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-2 hours
Hoole Library	No change	0 hours
Lache Library	Open until 7pm Thursday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-2 hours
Upton Library	Open until 7pm Tuesday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-2 hours
Ellesmere Port Area	Proposed change	Proposed change

Ellesmere Port Library	Open until 7pm Monday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-4 hours
Little Sutton Library	Open at 9:30am instead of 10am on Monday and Wednesday morning and open at 2pm instead of 1pm on Tuesday and Friday afternoon. Open until 7pm on Tuesday but close at 5pm other weekdays. Close Thursday instead of Wednesday	-3 hours
Hope Farm Library	Open at 9:30am instead of 10am. Open until 7pm on Thursday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-1 hour
<b>Northwich Area</b>	<b>Proposed change</b>	<b>Proposed change</b>
Barnton Library	Open at 9:30am instead of 10am. Open until 7pm Wednesday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-1 hour
Northwich Library	Open until 7pm Thursday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-2 hours
Sandiway Library	Open until 7pm Tuesday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-2 hours
Weaverham Library	Open until 7pm Friday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-2 hours
<b>Winsford Area</b>	<b>Proposed change</b>	<b>Proposed change</b>
Winsford Library	Open at 9am instead of 9:30am each weekday. Open until 7pm on Monday but close at 5pm other weekdays	+0.5 hours
Wharton Library	Open at 9:30am instead of 9am in the morning. Wednesday open 2pm to 5pm rather than closed. Friday open 2pm to 5pm rather than 12pm to 5pm	-1 hour
<b>Frodsham and Helsby Area</b>	<b>Proposed change</b>	<b>Proposed change</b>
Frodsham Library	Open until 7pm Wednesday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-3 hours
Helsby Library	Open until 7pm Tuesday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-2 hours
<b>Neston Area</b>	<b>Proposed change</b>	<b>Proposed change</b>
Neston Library	Open until 7pm Tuesday but close at 5pm other weekdays	-2 hours
<b>Rural Area</b>	<b>Proposed change</b>	<b>Proposed change</b>
Malpas Library	Open 3pm to 7pm, rather than 1.30pm to 7pm, Tuesday and Thursday	-3 hours
Mobile Library	No change	-0 hours
Tarporley Library	Open 3pm to 7pm, rather than 1.30pm to 7pm, Monday and Wednesday. Open Wednesday instead of Thursday	-3 hours
Tattenhall Library	Close Thursday	-3 hours
Tarvin Library	Open 2pm to 7pm Tuesday rather than 12pm to 7pm. Open 2pm to 5pm Thursday rather than 1.30pm to 5pm	-2.5 hours

You can find out more details about the current and proposed opening hours for each library in the appendices of the consultation document, pages 10-18, or you can find them on our consultation webpage here: [www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/librariesandmuseums](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/librariesandmuseums). This information is available in standard and web accessible formats.

### **How to share your views**

We would like to hear your views on the proposed principles and opening hours for museums and libraries to ensure they meet people's needs. There are a variety of ways you can get involved and share your views:

- Visit: [www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/librariesandmuseums](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/librariesandmuseums) to find out more and complete a survey
- Email: [libraries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:libraries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk) to share your views
- Write to: West Cheshire Museums and Libraries Consultation, Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BG
- Telephone: 0300 123 8 123 quoting 'West Cheshire Museums and Libraries Consultation'
- Paper copies are available on request using the contact details above. You can also pick up a paper copy from any library or museum across the borough. You can find your nearest library or museum online: [Find a library](#) or [Find a museum](#)

### **Drop-in sessions**

If you would like to share your views in-person, you can attend one of our drop-in sessions where you can come and talk to service managers about the principles and opening hours of libraries and/or museums.

They will be informal events where you can visit anytime during the timeslot specified.

- Thursday 15 February, from 3pm to 7pm at Weaver Hall Museum and Northwich Library
- Tuesday 20 February, from 9am to 1pm at Ellesmere Port Library
- Thursday 22 February, from 2pm to 6pm at Grosvenor Museum Chester
- Friday 1 March, from 9am to 1pm at Neston Library
- Thursday 7 March, from 1pm to 5pm at Lion Salt Works Northwich
- Saturday 9 March, from 9:30am to 1pm at Upton Library
- Monday 11 March, from 2pm to 7pm at Winsford Library
- Thursday 14 March, from 2pm to 5pm at Tarvin Library

### **How your views will be used**

Once the consultation closes, we will analyse all the feedback received.

The libraries and museums services will then use the feedback to help shape the future museums and libraries service offer. We will share a summary of the consultation findings on the Council website in spring 2024 alongside an update on the outcome of any decisions taken and the next steps. A paper copy will also be made available in each Council Museum and Library across the borough.