

To receive a report on the library survey 2026 and consider any associated actions and expenditures

Report to: Library Sub Committee

Date of Report: 07.09.2026

Officer Writing the Report: Community Hub Team Leader

Pursuant To: Library Sub Committee meeting held on Tuesday 8th July 2025
6:30pm Minute number 13/25/26 4.

Purpose of the report: To collate responses and explore key themes gathered from the recent library survey to better understand the community's engagement with the library, how it's services can be developed and the importance of the community hub within Saltash for residents and visitors.

Officer's Recommendations

Members are invited to;

1. Review the report on the survey and raise any questions, suggestions or reflections regarding the responses.
2. Consider the 'closed days' suggestion where groups or organisations would be able to access the library, in consultation with the Town Clerk to discuss viability, impact on health and safety and Town Council policies.
3. Consider the suggestion of a meeting/study pod to provide a private, bookable space for library users to work and/or study and consider any associated costs and hire fees.

Report Summary

“Libraries are at the heart of communities & provide invaluable resources as well as a safe space”

The survey received 125 responses and shows strong community support for Saltash Library Hub. The overwhelming majority of respondents consider the library hub to be very important to Saltash, with residents valuing it as a free, welcoming, safe and accessible community space. The data indicates that the hub is used for much more than borrowing books: it supports digital inclusion, children's development, social connection, access to council information, study, events, and wellbeing.

This report analyses community survey responses relating to Saltash Library Hub and identifies the main themes, opportunities and officer recommendations for consideration by members. The purpose is to inform future service planning, investment priorities and community engagement activity. Please refer to **Appendix A.** for data charts.

The dataset contains 125 individual responses, as shown in **Appendix B.** Respondents included current regular users, occasional users, rare users and non-users. Responses covered awareness of the library hub, current use, service priorities, barriers to use, views on community importance and suggestions for additional services or improvements. 83% of respondents are current Cornwall Libraries members, indicating that a wide range of views have been collected by members and also non-members. This is important to gather information on why non-members are not using the library hub. Responses from members of the public not currently visiting the library included reasons such as public transportation issues, opening hours, desire to see more children's activities and living further away.

Several respondents who rarely visit or do not currently use the service still considered the Library Hub to be very important to Saltash, demonstrating that the value of the facility extends beyond direct use. Many residents recognise the social and community benefits provided to others, even if they do not personally access services regularly.

Key areas for improvement raised repeatedly include public toilet and baby changing facilities, refreshments or a café-style offer, wider and better-publicised events, improved opening times, more children's and family activities, improved quiet or separate study and meeting space, and continued investment in books and reading resources.

Survey measure	Indicative finding from responses
Total responses	125 responses
Importance of the library hub	The very large majority rated it as "Very important"; only a very small number selected "Somewhat important" or "Not so important".
Frequency of use	Many respondents visit weekly or monthly, with a smaller group rarely visiting or not currently visiting.
Most valued current services	Books and other media, children's activities, events, free Wi-Fi and computer use, study space, photocopying and community signposting.
Most common improvement themes	Public toilets and baby changing, refreshments/café offer, more events and children's activities, better publicity, opening hours and improved study/meeting space.

Key Findings

Strong support for the library hub as an essential community asset

A significant theme throughout the survey is the role of the Library Hub in reducing isolation and strengthening community connections. Numerous respondents identified the Library Hub as one of the few free, indoor public spaces available within the town. Comments referenced older residents meeting friends, families attending children's activities, individuals working or studying, and people seeking information or support services. Several responses also highlighted the importance of the library during periods of financial pressure, noting that free access to books, computers, Wi-Fi and community information helps improve equality of access for residents. The survey clearly demonstrates that residents and visitors view the Library Hub as infrastructure that supports community wellbeing. Many comments linked the library directly to mental health, social inclusion and combating loneliness. This suggests that future service development should continue to position the Library

Hub not only as a library service but also as a preventative community resource supporting wider health and wellbeing outcomes.

Books remain central but the hub role is expanding

Borrowing books and media remains the core reason many respondents use the library. However, the data also demonstrates broad demand for the building to function as a community hub, including events, workshops, clubs, digital support, social prescribing activities, adult learning, advice sessions, health and wellbeing activity, and meeting space. This suggests that future planning should protect the library's reading and lending function while strengthening complementary community services.

Several respondents also mentioned the inclusivity aspect of the library- being a free resource means that the services are accessible and inclusive. One person said

"I love going to the library and reserving books online is easy. The staff are all so lovely and it's a very special place. For people that can't afford books or don't want to buy them the library is essential in providing a service to the community that is free and also using their computers is very handy. I have read 80 fiction books in 2025 all thanks to Saltash library"

104 respondents are current Cornwall Libraries members and 113 already knew Saltash has a Library Hub/community space. However, 12 were not aware and several comments suggest the word "Hub" or the full range of services could be advertised more clearly. The comment from one respondent shows the variety of needs that are met at the Library Hub *"Fantastic resource for all ages. Helps many with access to council services as well as wi fi and computers. Also great to keep children reading in the age of technology."*

Further advertisement and educational pieces on what makes the Saltash Library Hub a 'hub' will help to strengthen users' understanding on the role it plays and what services are on offer.

Public toilets and baby changing facilities are the most repeated practical request

A public toilet, accessible toilet and baby changing facilities were mentioned repeatedly across responses. The absence of these facilities was identified as a barrier for families with young children, older residents, people with mobility needs and those wishing to stay longer for events or study. This is the clearest practical improvement theme in the survey and has been delivered since the survey was concluded. The addition of the accessible public toilet and baby change facilities has been welcomed by library users, receiving positive feedback. It has been noted over the past few weeks that visitors are staying for longer which could be a direct result from the improvement works.

Refreshments and café/social space would increase dwell time

Many respondents asked for tea, coffee, a vending machine, a small café or refreshments. Comments suggest that refreshments would encourage longer visits, support social interaction, make attendance at events more attractive and help position the hub as a relaxed community meeting place. Some respondents also suggested that refreshments could generate modest income. Careful consideration should be taken when pricing products to ensure reasonable and fair rates are applied to provide financial support to the Town Council while remaining affordable and accessible to visitors.

Events are valued but residents and visitors want more variety and better publicity

Events, talks and workshops were repeatedly praised, with requests for more author talks, craft sessions, health talks, adult education, digital support, business events, heritage activity, book clubs, teenage activities, family holiday activities and preschool sessions. Several respondents reported hearing about activities only after they had taken place, indicating that promotion and communication should be improved alongside programme development.

There are multiple local advertising papers such as the Saltash Observer and the Cramleigh paper. The Cramleigh paper fees for an A5 spread is £168 per advert per month. This cost would be quite a financial commitment.

Over the past few months, the library team have been increasing visibility in the community by attending events, outreach, school visits, stalls etc across the town and wider community. These events are very effective at increasing engagement with the library and promoting events and activities. Continuation of these events will help raise awareness and share information with a wider audience. The Community Hub Team Leader continues to create promotional material for the Library Hub and increased social media presence now that the library has moved back to the main building following completion of the refurbishment project.

Staff are a major strength of the service

Respondents repeatedly praised staff as welcoming, friendly, knowledgeable, professional and helpful. This positive sentiment is important because it underpins trust in the hub and supports its role as a safe and inclusive community setting. Future plans should recognise staff contribution and ensure any expanded activity is realistically resourced.

One respondent commented; *"It is the only facility I know of in Saltash that is open most of the day most of the week. Mention must be made of the truly exceptional staff- all of them. I have never come across better- Friendly, professional, always willing to help and nothing is too much trouble. 11/10!"*

Children, Young People and Families

Children's activities emerged as one of the most valued elements of the Library Hub offer. Storytime, Music Man, Lego Club, holiday activities and family events were repeatedly praised by respondents. Many parents and grandparents reported attending specifically because of these activities and viewed them as an important way of encouraging reading, social skills and early childhood development. One respondent said *"It's an excellent community resource for so many reasons. I have attended events there, visit regularly with my young grandchild, borrow books both personally and for my book club. The staff are all lovely, and very helpful. It's a happy place to visit"*

A notable finding is the level of demand for additional activities aimed at different age groups:

- More preschool sessions across multiple days.
- Additional baby and toddler groups.
- After-school activities scheduled later in the afternoon.
- More holiday activities for primary-aged children.
- Activities aimed specifically at teenagers.
- Home education support sessions and clubs.
- Children's coding or gaming clubs.

Several respondents reported being unable to attend existing activities because they fall on working days or begin before children travelling from surrounding villages can arrive. This demonstrates opportunities not only to increase activity provision but to review the timing of existing programmes to maximise participation.

Opening hours and access affect working families and non-users

Some respondents requested later opening, weekend options, Wednesday opening or activities scheduled after school. Non-users and rare users cited opening times, transport, lack of awareness and uncertainty over what the “hub” offers as barriers. Flexible scheduling and clearer communication could help widen participation without necessarily requiring large-scale operational changes immediately. Regular late-night opening has been trialled across a number of libraries in Cornwall. In the majority of cases, these sessions were discontinued due to low attendance. Weekly late-night opening at Saltash Library Hub would also have implications on staffing. A more proportionate option would be to consider one evening opening per month, or ad-hoc evening opening for specific events. This would respond to survey feedback by improving access for working residents while limiting the operational impact. Staff consultation would be required to establish whether a monthly late opening is feasible. If implemented, a trial period should be used to monitor occupancy levels, engagement and overall effectiveness before any longer-term decision is made.

Some libraries in Cornwall offer ‘Closed Days’ where inducted groups or organisations can access the library while it is closed to the public.

This offers a private, quiet space for groups that may be dealing with sensitive issues or require a calm, focused environment. Examples of this include support groups, art activities and wellbeing activities. These Closed Days are not staffed. Groups are inducted and a key holder opens and closes the premises. The groups are responsible for leaving the premises in a clean, orderly manner and have agreements set in place prior to use. This opportunity supports users who may otherwise not visit the space. The libraries that offer 'Closed Days' mention that feedback from users is extremely positive and they have become a regular occurrence.

Study space, meeting space and pods

A number of respondents indicated that a bookable quiet space would be a welcome addition to the Library Hub. Due to the layout of the building, enclosed public areas are not available. The provision of meeting pods was suggested to offer users a private environment for study, individual work or small meetings. The mezzanine level may provide a suitable location, as it is already used by members of the public for study and informal meetings.

Thematic Analysis of Improvement Requests

Theme	Examples from responses	Implication for Council
Facilities	Public toilet, accessible toilet, baby changing, pram-friendly space, seating.	Highest practical priority; supports inclusion and longer visits.
Refreshments	Tea and coffee, café, cake, social café space.	Potential to improve user experience and modest income, subject to feasibility.
Children and families	More preschool sessions, Music Man, storytime, holiday crafts, after-school activities, baby groups.	Opportunity to strengthen early years support and family engagement.
Events and learning	Author talks, health talks, adult education, craft groups, language learning, digital skills, heritage talks.	Consider feasibility, taking into consideration costs and staffing. Funding opportunities can provide financial support to deliver.

Access and opening	Later opening, weekend hours, Wednesday activities, better bus links, clearer quiet times.	Review scheduling and pilot targeted sessions for working families and young people.
Marketing and awareness	Better advertising, clearer explanation of “hub”, more social media, events promoted earlier.	Low-cost action likely to increase usage and reach non-users.
Space management	Quiet study space, separate event area, meeting pods, less disruption during talks.	Consider zoning, booking arrangements and ‘closed days’ for groups/ activities requiring quiet space.

Next Steps

1. Continue to develop the library event calendar, implementing public suggestions where viable.
2. Publicise events- utilise notice boards around the town. Increase efforts to advertise in areas where dwell time is extended such as doctor surgeries, dentists etc.
3. Increase family workshops and activities to nurture positive connections
4. Increase sessions with external organisations such as BAPS, Memory Box, MHA to expand on inclusivity offer.

Overall, this survey has pulled together valuable data from both library members and non-members to highlight areas that are succeeding, need improving and insights into what would attract more usage. These suggestions and feedback can be implemented in communications strategy, planning, library services and facilities to improve the library hub for the community. Not only does this survey provide important data, it also demonstrated the strong want and need for the library as a vital community hub.

The Library Hub is widely valued not only for its books and reading materials, but also as a vital community resource. Its free, inclusive and welcoming environment reduces social isolation, supports wellbeing and provides equitable access to information, digital services, learning opportunities and community support. Accessible facilities and responsive services help meet a range of physical, sensory and social needs. Continued investment will protect this essential service and strengthen its contribution to community resilience, digital inclusion and quality of life.

How Does This Meet the Business Plan?

Recreation and Leisure: The report supports the continued provision and improvement of the Library Hub, including books, events, cultural activities, learning opportunities, children's sessions and community space.

Health and Wellbeing: The survey demonstrates the Hub's role in reducing loneliness, supporting mental wellbeing and providing a free, safe and welcoming

place for social connection. Proposed family activities, health sessions and partnerships with community organisations further strengthen this priority.

Boosting Jobs and Economic Prosperity: Free computer and Wi-Fi access, digital support, study facilities, adult learning and potential business events help residents develop skills and access employment opportunities. A refreshments offer could also generate modest income.

Travel and Transport: The report identifies transport, opening times and accessibility as barriers. Targeted evening sessions and more flexible scheduling could improve access for working residents, families and people in surrounding areas.

Signature of Officer:

Community Hub Team Leader