



## Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee

|               |                                  |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Date:</b>  | <b>Thursday, 22 October 2026</b> |
| <b>Time:</b>  | <b>6.00 p.m.</b>                 |
| <b>Venue:</b> | Wallasey Town Hall               |

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PLEASE NOTE: Public seating is limited therefore members of the public wishing to attend are asked to register their attendance in advance by emailing [committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk). Wirral Council is fully committed to equalities and our obligations under The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. If you have any adjustments that would help you attend or participate at this meeting, please let us know as soon as possible and we would be happy to facilitate where possible. Please contact [committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk)

This meeting will be [webcast](#)

## AGENDA

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**
2. **APOLOGIES**
3. **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

4. **MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)**

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23 September 2026.

## **5. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your question/statement by the deadline for submission.

### **5.1 Public Questions**

Notice of question to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Monday 19 October 2026 to the Council's Monitoring Officer via this link: [Public Question Form](#) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 10.

For more information on how your personal information will be used, please see this link: [Document Data Protection Protocol for Public Speakers at Committees | Wirral Council](#)

Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your question by the deadline for submission.

### **5.2 Statements and Petitions**

Notice of representations to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Monday 19 October 2026 to the Council's Monitoring Officer ([committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk)) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 11.1.

To register your intention to give a statement please do so via this link: [Public Statement Notification](#), and this will be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 11.1.

Petitions may be presented to the Committee. The person presenting the petition will be allowed to address the meeting briefly (not exceeding three minute) to outline the aims of the petition. The Chair will refer the matter to another appropriate body of the Council within whose terms of reference it falls without discussion, unless a relevant item appears elsewhere on the Agenda. Please give notice of petitions to [committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk) in advance of the meeting.

### **5.3 Questions by Members**

Questions by Members to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Orders 12.3 to 12.8.

## **SECTION A - KEY AND OTHER DECISIONS**

### **6. LIVERPOOL AND WIRRAL CORONER AREA ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 5 - 22)**

**7. WIRRAL LIBRARIES STRATEGY 2026-2031 (Pages 23 - 82)**

The PDF file may not be suitable to view for people with disabilities, users of assistive technology or mobile phone devices. Please contact [jamesroberts@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:jamesroberts@wirral.gov.uk) if you would like this document in an accessible format.

**SECTION B - BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

**8. ANNUAL UPDATE REGARDING THE WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE (Pages 83 - 94)**

**9. ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY - VISITOR ECONOMY AND CULTURE (Pages 95 - 102)**

**10. HERITAGE CHAMPION UPDATE (Pages 103 - 112)**

**SECTION C - WORK PROGRAMME / OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**11. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 113 - 122)**

**Terms of Reference**

The terms of reference for this committee can be found at the end of this agenda.

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## TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 23 September 2026

Present:

Councillor KJ Williams (Vice-Chair)

|             |                      |                    |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Councillors | M Redfern            | G McManus          |
|             | J Grier              | K Murphy           |
|             | G Wood               | L Luxon Kewley (in |
|             | K Murphy (in place   | place of A         |
|             | of R Molyneux)       | Ainsworth)         |
|             | I Lewis (in place of |                    |
|             | H Cameron)           |                    |

### 20 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Vice-Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website.

### 21 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from  
Councillor Jenny Johnson (Chair)  
Councillor Ruth Molyneux. Councillor Kieran Murphy deputised.  
Councillor Kathy Hodson.  
Councillor Ann Ainsworth. Councillor Louise Luxon-Kewley deputised.  
Councillor Helen Cameron. Councillor Ian Lewis deputised.  
Councillor Kaitlin Stuart.

### 22 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No interests were declared.

### 23 **MINUTES**

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2026 be approved and adopted as a correct record.**

## 24 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

There were two public questions and one statement submitted to this meeting. No petitions or member questions had been received.

## 25 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Mr Warwick asked what could be done to help Wirral Council develop a valuable visitor economy, particularly in East Wirral with its social economic issues. The Chair responded that Wirral Council was working closely with the Combined Authority and Liverpool City Region Destination Partnership to strengthen the visitor economy. Positive growth was highlighted in the borough's tourism sector and noted that the Council's new Economic Growth Strategy would include a continued focus on the visitor economy, economic growth and opportunities across the borough.

Mr Warwick asked a supplementary question regarding the use of the Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) methodology for measuring tourism figures. The Chair advised that a written response would be provided.

The Principal Lawyer read out a question on behalf of Zoe Campbell asking what steps Wirral Council was taking to introduce a free summer holiday swimming programme to support low-income families and improve water safety. The Chair responded that Wirral Council had already provided free summer swimming for children and young people throughout August 2026 at all pool-based leisure facilities, aimed at improving access to leisure opportunities, supporting wellbeing and increasing water confidence and safety.

### 25.1 **Statements and Petitions**

Councillor Simon Mountney made a statement in relation to Item 6, Wirral Archaeology and the Search for Brunanburh. He highlighted the historical significance of the Battle of Brunanburh and the compelling case for Bromborough as its possible location. He emphasised the importance of supporting archaeological research and recording Wirral's heritage, particularly in light of the proposed Peak Cluster development. Councillor Mountney also highlighted the potential benefits for the borough's heritage offer and visitor economy.

## 26 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

There were no questions by Members.

## 27 **WIRRAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE SEARCH FOR BRUNANBURH**

Wirral Archaeology CIC presented the report and provided an update on ongoing research into the possible location of the Battle of Brunanburh. They outlined the archaeological, historical, topographical and place-name evidence that had informed their work and highlighted a significant number of artefacts recovered from sites across central Wirral. Members were advised that the findings indicate the presence of a rare multi-period archaeological landscape, with evidence spanning from the Mesolithic period, Bronze Age and Iron Age.

They also highlighted the wider cultural and educational value of the work, the potential significance for Wirral's heritage offer and visitor economy, and the importance of protecting and preserving archaeological sites.

Members raised the following questions/ comments:

- Members queried what evidence would be required for the Battlefields Trust to formally recognise a Brunanburh battlefield site.
- Members enquired how any future findings would be verified, published and incorporated into heritage and tourism strategies.
- Members sought information on the support and resources that could be provided to assist ongoing research.
- Members asked about changes to the group's research methodology and the significance of the discoveries made to date.
- Members queried whether recovered artefacts could be displayed within Wirral museums.
- Members asked how Wirral Archaeology CIC was engaging with schools, community groups and the wider public to promote local history and archaeology.

Representatives of Wirral Archaeology CIC outlined the challenges of identifying ancient battlefields and advised that further scientific testing and professional evaluation of artefacts was ongoing. They highlighted the significance of the multi-period archaeological evidence discovered, the importance of protecting archaeological sites, and the educational and community engagement work being undertaken across the borough. Officers also agreed to explore opportunities for displaying artefacts within Wirral's museum and heritage venues.

**Resolved – That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee notes the contents of the report and the attached appendix.**

## 28 **MEMBER CHAMPION FOR HERITAGE - UPDATE REPORT**

The Member Champion for Heritage provided an update on heritage-related activity across the borough. The Member Champion highlighted the following to Members:

- Progress on the development of a tourism and heritage trail
- Engagement with New York's Central Park Conservancy and discussions around World Heritage Site applications.
- Positive developments within the Birkenhead Town of Culture bid and the importance of continued investment in key heritage and cultural attractions.
- The significant contribution of heritage and community volunteer groups, including the successful centenary celebrations of the Vale Park Bandstand and their role in supporting local heritage initiatives.
- The success of the 2026 Wirral Heritage Open Days programme and opportunities to further promote Wirral's heritage offer.

**Resolved – That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee notes the contents of the report and attached appendix.**

## 29 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Vice-Chair introduced the work programme, no further items were proposed for inclusion in the work programme.

**Resolved – That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee notes and comments on the proposed Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee work programme.**



## TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday 22 OCTOBER 2026

|               |                                                      |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| REPORT TITLE: | LIVERPOOL AND WIRRAL CORONER AREA ANNUAL REPORT 2025 |
| REPORT OF:    | DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES                       |

### REPORT SUMMARY

A Coroner is an independent judicial office holder, appointed by the local authority. They investigate deaths that have been reported to them if it appears that,

- The death was violent or unnatural
- The cause of death is unknown, or
- The person died in prison, police custody or another type of state detention.

The appended report is the full annual report of the Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area for the period of 2025.

The report supports the draft Wirral Plan: A New Chapter for Wirral (2027-31) specifically supporting the aim to deliver reliable, everyday services for Wirral residents.

This matter affects all wards in the borough.

This is not a key decision.

### RECOMMENDATION/S

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to note the report.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee within its terms of reference, has responsibility for customer contact, community development and community services, including all of those functions related to community safety and also those regarding the promotion of community engagement. The Committee is charged by full council to undertake responsibility for bereavement services and support to the Coroners Service.
- 1.2 The report has been produced to enable the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee to undertake this function.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 A further option would be not to undertake a review of this report. However, the Committee is tasked to undertake this function as laid out in the Constitution.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 On 2nd April 2015 the Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Areas merged to form one jurisdiction. Liverpool City Council is the lead authority working closely with Wirral Council. The Coroner Area of Liverpool and Wirral is a large geographical area of approximately 27,000 Hectares with a population of around 830,000. The area is a part of the Liverpool City Region which is a world class centre of excellence in commerce, culture, education and industry and as such the area has a significantly larger workforce than resident population. The Coroner works closely with two registration districts, Liverpool Register Office and Wirral Register Office.
- 3.2 The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 sought to give effect to some of the key recommendations of Dame Janet Smith's Shipman Inquiry and the Luce Review which both reported in 2003.
- 3.3 In particular, the intention behind Schedule 2 of the 2009 Act was to move towards fewer (but larger) coroner areas which are supported by a full-time Senior Coroner. This approach could lead to greater economies of scale, through sharing of staff and resources and will enable full-time Senior Coroners to focus entirely on their coronial duties, thus developing their skills and experiences more fully.

### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The gross expenditure outturn for 2025/256 for the Liverpool & Wirral Coroner Services was £ 2,123,513. The recharge ratio according to population is 63% Liverpool City Council, 37% Wirral Council.
- 4.2 A further breakdown of the recharge ratio is included in the appended report.

### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Section 24 of the 2009 Act requires the relevant local authority for a coroner area to provide 'whatever officers and other staff are needed by the coroners for that area to carry out their functions'. The authority must provide accommodation that is 'appropriate to the needs of those coroners'.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 This report is for information purposes only and as such there are no direct legal implications.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 This report enables the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee to review the coroners annual report and any associated risks. By not undertaking this function, the Committee would not be discharging its duties as laid out in the constitution. This is a high-profile service and carries reputational risk implications.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The report has been produced for information and to enable further debate and discussion by members of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. However, this report is for information purposes only and as such there are no direct equality implications.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 This report is for information purposes only and as such, there are no direct environment or climate implications

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 This report is for information purposes only and as such, there are no direct community wealth building implications associated with this report.

## **12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 This report is for information purposes only and as such, there are no direct crime and disorder implications associated with this report.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Michelle Booth  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
email: michellebooth@wirral.gov.uk

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1 Annual Report 2025

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The Coroners and Justice Act 2009

The Shipman Enquiry

Cabinet Report 2 December 2012

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in accordance with 6.2(g) Terms of Reference: in relation to bereavement services and support to the Coroner's service.

### **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

| <b>Council Meeting</b>                           | <b>Date</b>                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure</b> | <b>30<sup>th</sup> November 2023</b><br><b>17<sup>th</sup> October 2024</b><br><b>23<sup>rd</sup> October 2025</b> |



# Liverpool & Wirral Coroner Area

## Annual Report 2025



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# **LIVERPOOL & WIRRAL CORONER AREA**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

### **Background Information**

The Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Areas merged to form one jurisdiction in April 2015. Liverpool City Council is the lead authority working closely with Wirral Council.

The Coroner Area of Liverpool and Wirral is a large geographical area of approximately 27,000 Hectares with a population of around 830,000. The area is part of the Liverpool City Region which is a world class centre of excellence in commerce, culture, education and industry and as such the area has a significantly larger workforce than resident population. We work closely with two registration districts, Liverpool Register Office and Wirral Register Office.

The Area is a major transport hub with main arterial roads and motorways, Liverpool John Lennon Airport, Main Line Rail links (Lime Street & Birkenhead Train Stations), Mersey Tunnels, Mersey Ferry, Ports and an Ocean Cruise Liner terminal.

There are three Universities, two cathedrals, two large local prisons and a diverse multi-ethnic multicultural harmonious population. The area has two Premier League football clubs, one Football League football club and a championship golf course.

The area is served by three large district general teaching hospitals namely:  
Liverpool University Teaching Hospital – Royal Liverpool & Broadgreen  
Aintree University Hospital  
Arrowe Park Hospital

and there are five tertiary centres of healthcare excellence namely:  
Liverpool Heart & Chest Hospital  
Liverpool Children's Hospital (Alder Hey)  
Liverpool Women's Hospital  
Clatterbridge Hospital  
The Walton Centre for Neurology & Neurosurgery

There are also two adult and two children's hospices. The jurisdiction also contains a number of mental health units with patients detained under the Mental Health Act 1983.

### **The Role of the Coroner**

A Coroner is an independent judicial office holder, appointed and funded by the local authority. The Local Authority appoints the Coroner but does not employ them. This is an important distinction to maintain judicial independence. The Coroner is responsible for investigating deaths that have been reported to them if it appears that:

- The death was violent or unnatural
- The cause of death is unknown, or
- The person died in prison, police custody or another type of state detention.

An inquest is an enquiry not a trial. It does not determine matters of civil or criminal liability, nor does it seek to apportion blame for the death. The purpose of the investigation is to answer 4 key statutory questions: who the person was, where and when they died and how they came by their death.

We work under the guidance and direction of the Chief Coroner and the Ministry of Justice.

The Liverpool & Wirral Coroner's service and Court is based at:

**Gerard Majella Courthouse, Boundary Street, Liverpool, L5 2QD**

In accordance with the provisions of s24 of the Coroner and Justice Act 2009, the relevant lead authorities will provide administration support for the Coroners and the Court. They are also responsible for providing accommodation for the court(s) and for the whole service (Coroners, Coroners Officers and Administration Staff) to be co-located. All running costs for the service; accommodation, information technology (including for coroner's officers), coronial investigations relating to post mortem, toxicology, medical reports and witnesses/jurors' fees to be met by the relevant local authority. They will deal with all general enquiries on behalf of the coroner's service from bereaved families to information requests, funeral directors, insurance companies and others.

Merseyside Police provide Coroner's Investigation Officers to investigate deaths and treasure reported to the coroners to enable them to carry out their function.

The Court and Offices are dedicated to the Coroner's Service; however, they are conveniently co-located with the Council's Emergency Planning Team and the Child Death Overview panel. There are lawned areas, a garden, secure staff parking, public parking, a separate jury retiring building, the facility to run up to three courts, a vulnerable witness room, video-conferencing, five advocates conference/meeting rooms, a waiting room and an excellent Coroner's Court Support Service.

All coroner's support staff are located in the same building. There is an administrative team of four local authority officers led by the Chief Clerk/Coroner's Service Manager. There are thirteen Merseyside Police Coroner's Investigative Officers, led by the Senior Coroner's Investigation Officer and on occasion are supplemented by serving police officers for investigative duties.

## Coroners

In the Liverpool & Wirral Coroner Area there is a Senior Coroner and Area Coroner, both full time, and there are currently nine Assistant Coroners (three of whom sit regularly, one is an Assistant Coroner in the neighbouring Coroner Area – Sefton, St Helens & Knowsley, three are Senior Coroners in different Coroner Areas and one is a retired Senior Coroner).

## Our duty

To apply the law relating to coronial investigations putting families at the heart of the service and providing a professional, sensitive and caring approach to meet the needs of bereaved people who come into contact with the Coroners Service.

## Workload

In 2025 there were 2288 reported deaths. This resulted in 664 inquests being opened in 2025 and a total number of 762 inquests being concluded in 2025.

There has been a substantial increase in the post-mortem examination rate over the last few years, rising from 34% in 2020 to 43% in 2021, it increased again in 2023 to 45% but in 2025 reduced slightly back to 44%. The national post mortem rate average in 2025 increased to 51%.

Our average time to conclude an inquest increased from 10 weeks to 14 weeks. This was because of 2025 being the first full 12 months that the Medical Examiner system was operational. The implementation of the Medical Examiner system reduced the number of natural cause deaths reported to the coroner. These natural cause deaths were quickly listed for inquest as the doctors referring were able to provide most of the evidence for the coroner to conclude the inquest. Therefore, these natural cause inquests reduced the average inquest turnaround time. The national average time taken to conclude inquests remained stable at 31.3 weeks.

The court only orders post mortem examinations when necessary. The court will use past medical history and the circumstances to hold some inquests. This enables the limited resources to be targeted on those unnatural and state detention deaths which require the most investigation.

Less invasive autopsy is available where appropriate, as an adjunct to conventional death investigation, in accordance with Chief Coroner's guidance and advice from the Royal College of Pathologists and the Royal College of Radiologists.

In Liverpool and Wirral, all directions for investigations opened are timetabled as to when evidence should be filed and dates are set, such as when an investigation will be reviewed, or an inquest opened, or an inquest will be concluded. These directions can only be set by a coroner. This method of working ensures that inquests are dealt with in a timely and efficient manner.

## Medical Examiner System

Introduced on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024 as part of the Death Certification Reforms, the statutory Medical Examiner system was implemented in England and Wales. The new system requires that every death is subject either to scrutiny by the medical examiner or by a coroner, ensuring that all deaths are subject to an independent review. The principle underlying the legislation is so that where a death is one of natural causes and did not occur in custody or state detention, scrutiny should be provided by the medical examiner. When Section 1 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 is engaged, scrutiny is provided by the coroner. This new system should ensure that only those deaths which require investigation are referred to the coroner.

The Death Certification Reforms introduced a new [medical certificate of cause of death](#) (MCCD). Medical practitioners are now able to complete an MCCD if they attended the deceased in their lifetime. This represents a simplification of previous rules when cases

had to be referred to a coroner if the medical practitioner had not seen the patient within the 28 days prior to death or had not seen in person the patient after death.

Over the last few years, the coroner's service has worked closely with local hospitals and Medical Examiners (ME) and their officers to ensure appropriate and prompt referrals to the Coroner from the ME to reduce distress on bereaved families. This has resulted in a decrease in the number of referrals from hospitals that involve a natural cause of death, but the referrals made tend to involve many complexities in medical care and treatment therefore the complexity of the caseload has increased.

The statistics for 2025 are representative of the first full year working alongside the Medical Examiner system.

### National Statistics for 2025

These were published for England and Wales on 14 May 2025 and some extracts to note are:

There were 147,800 deaths reported to coroners in 2025, the lowest level since the start of the annual time series in 1995 – **down** 15% (from 174,900) compared to 2024.

There were 622 deaths in state detention (including deaths of those released from custody within 7 days and residents of probation-approved schemes) reported to coroners in 2025 (**up** from 549 in 2024). This **increase** was driven by an 8% rise in deaths of those in prison custody and a 21% rise in deaths of those in Mental Health Act detention.

There were 75,900 post-mortem examinations ordered by coroners in 2025, a 7% **fall** compared to 2024. The proportion of reported deaths requiring a post-mortem **increased** by five percentage points over the same period.

36,000 inquests were opened in 2025, **down** 2% (from 36,700) compared to 2024. As a proportion of deaths reported, the number of inquests opened is at its highest level since the start of the annual time series in 1995, at 24%.

In 2025, 39,100 inquest conclusions were recorded in total, **down** 1% compared to 2024. Natural causes had the largest decrease, **down** 24% on 2024, to 3,700 inquest conclusions in 2025.

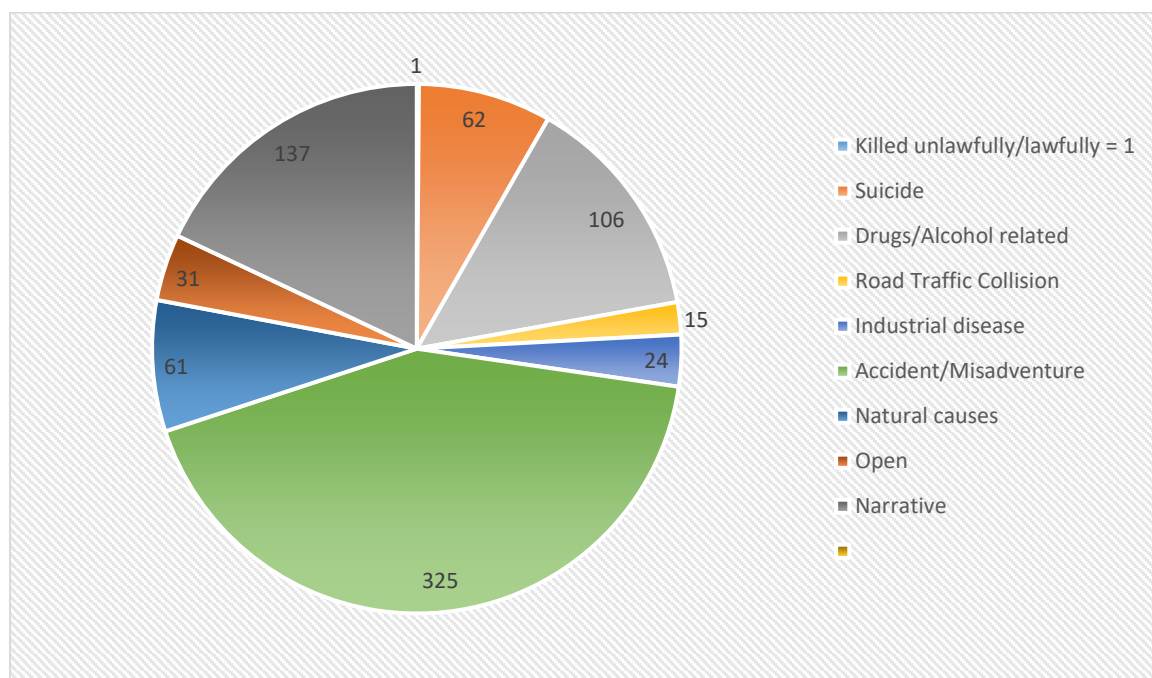
Suicide conclusions increased in 2025 compared to the previous year to their highest level since the start of the series in 1995. This increase was driven by male suicides, with female suicides falling. It is important to note that these conclusions are recorded after an inquest and so may relate to deaths from the same or earlier years.

In 2025, 21% (15,931) of all post-mortem examinations included histology, an increase from 20% (16,604) in 2024. Post-mortem examinations including toxicology increased by 231 cases over the same period to 23,063 (up 1%), with 30% of all post-mortem examinations held in 2025 including toxicology - continuing the consistently rising trend since the timeseries begun in 2011.

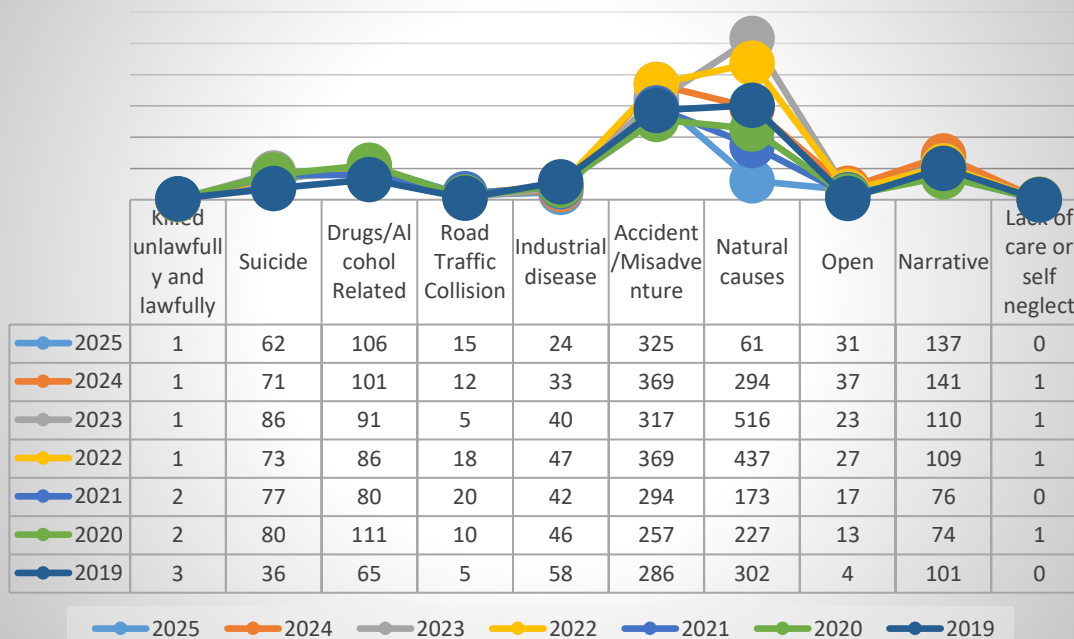
## STATISTICS – LIVERPOOL & WIRRAL CORONER AREA

### Key findings from 2025

29% of deaths reported in 2025 resulted in an inquest being held. The breakdown of the 762 inquest conclusions was as follows:



### Inquest Conclusions - comparison 2019-2025



## Liverpool & Wirral Coroner Area – 2025 Comparison With 2024

### REPORTED DEATHS

|                                                                                |      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Reported deaths 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2025 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2025 | 2288 |
| Reported deaths 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2024 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2024 | 2614 |
| <i>31% reduction in referrals</i>                                              |      |

### INQUESTS

|                                                                                        |      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Inquests concluded from 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2025 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2025 | 762  |
| Inquests concluded from 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2024 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2024 | 1060 |
| <i>28% reduction in number of inquests concluded</i>                                   |      |

|                                                                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Inquests opened from 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2025 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2025 | 664 |
| Inquests opened from 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2024 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2024 | 957 |
| <i>30% decrease in number of inquests opened</i>                                    |     |

### POST MORTEMS

|                                                         |      |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------|------------|
| Number of deaths reported that resulted in a PM in 2025 | 1011 | (44% rate) |
| Number of deaths reported that resulted in a PM in 2024 | 1136 | (43% rate) |
| <i>11% reduction in number of post mortems</i>          |      |            |

### JURY INQUESTS

|                                             |    |
|---------------------------------------------|----|
| Number of inquests held with a jury in 2025 | 13 |
| Number of inquests held with a jury in 2024 | 15 |

### TIME TAKEN TO CONCLUDE INQUESTS

#### 2025

|                                                 |     |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|
| % of inquests concluded within 1 month in 2025  | 49% |
| % of inquests concluded within 3 months in 2025 | 63% |
| % of inquests concluded within 6 months in 2025 | 89% |

#### 2024

|                                                 |     |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|
| % of inquests concluded within 1 month in 2024  | 63% |
| % of inquests concluded within 3 months in 2024 | 76% |
| % of inquests concluded within 6 months in 2024 | 92% |

The statutory guidance is that an inquest should be held within 6 months of the date of death.

## Performance

Performance management is critical to maintain an efficient and effective Coroner's Service.

*Caution should be taken however when making comparisons between coroner areas as differences in local authority support, resource, facilities, and socio-economic make up mean this will not always be comparing like with like.*

### 2025 comparison with neighbouring Coroner Areas

| Area                         | Deaths reported | Post-mortems | Post-mortem rate | No. of inquests opened | Average inquest waiting time |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Liverpool & Wirral           | 2288            | 1011         | 44%              | 664                    | 14 weeks                     |
| Sefton, St Helens & Knowsley | 1666            | 793          | 48%              | 362                    | 15 weeks                     |
| Cheshire                     | 2835            | 1126         | 40%              | 816                    | 19 weeks                     |
| Manchester City              | 1701            | 916          | 54%              | 750                    | 18 weeks                     |

Complex Coroner Areas which have a prison within their boundary will have to hold jury inquests for unnatural deaths, which inevitably lengthen the time taken to conclude these types of complex inquests.

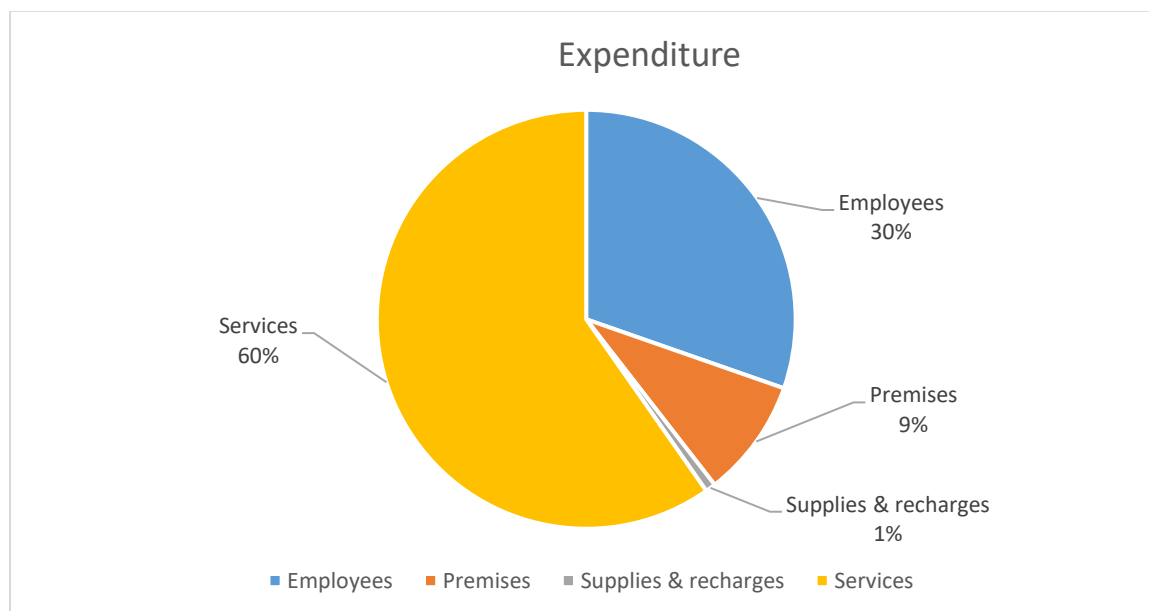
### 2025 comparison with Coroner Areas of a similar demographic

| Area                     | Deaths reported | No. of deaths in state detention | Post-mortem rate | No. of inquests concluded | Average inquest waiting time |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Liverpool & Wirral       | 2288            | 11                               | 44%              |                           | 14 weeks                     |
| West Yorkshire (Eastern) | 2900            | 32                               | 45%              |                           | 21 weeks                     |
| Birmingham & Solihull    | 3700            | 20                               | 45%              |                           | 17 weeks                     |
| Manchester City          | 1701            | 7                                | 54%              |                           | 18 weeks                     |

## Budget

The gross expenditure outturn for 2025/2026 for the Liverpool & Wirral Coroner Service was £2,123,513. The recharge ratio according to population is 63% Liverpool City Council, 37% Wirral Council. Therefore, the cost of the Coroner's Service for 2025/26 was:

Liverpool     £1,337,813                      Wirral   £785,700     The breakdown is as follows:



60% of the budget was spent on services, which include medical fees (post-mortems), outside analysis (toxicology), coroner removals, hospital mortuary storage fees, juror and witness fees and medical reports.

30% of the budget was spent on employees – this includes the Coroners' salaries (including assistant coroner sittings) and the administration support team for the Court.

10% of the budget was spent on recharges/premises – this is for the running of the Court premises along with central support charges for IT, Legal Services, finance, premise management and resolution centre costs.

## Coroners' Courts Support Service

The Coroners' Courts Support Service is a registered charity whose volunteers give emotional and practical support to families and other witnesses attending inquests. The team have been operating in Liverpool and Wirral since 31st October 2011.

Since then, volunteers have supported over 10,000 family members and friends. They also assist witnesses and give support to the many professionals (police, fire, ambulance services and advocates, solicitors) who attend court. For more information visit:

<https://coronerscourtsupportservice.org.uk/>

## Compliments

Each year we receive many compliments from bereaved families which demonstrate our commitment to put them at the heart of the service. Here are some examples:

*"I just want to say a big thank you for everything, keeping us updated, your kindness and integrity, and the compassion you have shown through out this horrible process. Your understanding and empathy have been priceless. Thank you once again for being such a blessing. You have made this whole thing so much easier to cope with."*

*"I just wanted to sincerely thank you for all your kindness, support, and guidance throughout the lead-up to the inquest and on the day itself. You were absolutely right, the Coroner was so kind and compassionate. If you have the opportunity, please pass on my heartfelt thanks to her as well. At such a difficult time, it means so much to have someone who listens, offers reassurance, and makes you feel safe. You did all of that and more, and I can't thank you enough. I will always be grateful for everything you did for me, and I wish you all the very best for the future."*

*"Thank you so much for this information. I appreciate how speedy and accommodating you have been with this request, you will be part of the help to get my daughter the closure she desperately needs."*

*"May I take this opportunity to express my very sincere thanks on behalf of myself, my wife, and indeed all the family to both yourself and the Coroner for all your kindness at the hearing on Thursday last. None of us quite knew just what to expect, and so, it was with a certain amount of trepidation that we attended, however, both yourself and your colleague, I believe, went to great lengths to offer us all comfort, empathy, concern, and sheer kindness, whilst carrying out your respective roles, and in doing so, made a very sad occasion so much more bearable. Please accept our heartfelt thanks."*

*"I really appreciate your compassion and empathy throughout this whole process. You've been so understanding and generous with your time and effort in explaining everything - I'm so very grateful."*

*"We as a family are thankful for your advice & support. Including the help, support and expertise of all of those involved in trying to ascertain a cause of death for my brother. We can't believe he is no longer with us. I know that we have never met and I know that dealing with these matters is your job. However it matters how you do your job. You have been so caring, supportive, understanding & professional. It can't be easy for you to do this on a daily basis. You have made a difference to us. Despite losing my brother, the manner in which you have helped us has made a difference. Thank you!"*

*"Please accept my thanks and gratitude for all the help you have given. This is as you are well aware, a stressful time, but one made easier by your professionalism and humanity."*

*"Thank you for your email, and also many thanks for the kindness and compassion you have shown me during what has been a very difficult time. Your honest, open and straightforward way of dealing with this process has helped make it bearable."*

"I'd just like to thank you for your compassion. You were one of the first people I spoke to regarding formalities surrounding my mum's passing and you were so kind, empathetic and always sounded like you genuinely cared. Since speaking to you, I have dealt with numerous corporate bereavement teams, (banks, housing, energy suppliers) and even the funeral home at times, who lack the bare basics required in such a role. All have astounded me at times at their lack of care and compassion during one of life's most difficult times. You are very good at your job, and I won't forget your kindness and reassuring manner at a time where it was needed most."

*"A million thanks for your help and support in this difficult situation. I can never talk you up enough, you might think you know what it all meant to us today but you will never actually realise what it actually means ~ only for the help of all the team at St. John's ended in the exact way he wanted, to be home in Ireland for a traditional Irish wake and only for your involvement, the coroner and the Registrar in the city hall for coming back in to work after finishing her day! A million thanks to each and every single one of you for everything. You have made a broken hearted family extremely happy to have their son home and fulfil his wishes."*

"The personal experience for us losing mum was traumatic and heart breaking. The care, compassion and professionalism from the coroner's office was amazing. Following the Discontinuation Notice, I spoke with her and asked her would she have a conversation with my dad to explain more simply to him the reasons for discontinuation. She called and we had a telephone conversation with her and my dad and she was so patient and took time to allay his concerns and worries. This made a difference to him in understanding not only the process but also the reasons that mum died and how he had done all that he could. The peace of mind for him is immeasurable after being married for 60 years."

*"I just wanted to express my heartfelt thanks to you and the entire Coroner's Office for your kindness and support during this incredibly difficult time. Your guidance, patience, and compassion meant so much to us. We were able to repatriate my sister, and her funeral was completed today. This would not have been possible without your help. Our family are deeply grateful for everything you did. Thank you once again for your care and support."*

"I would like to thank you and the Coroner for the very professional and sensitive way in which you dealt with the investigation into my brother's death. I am very grateful additionally for keeping me up to date at all material times and for the very sensitive way in which you dealt with us, and of course that includes the Coroner. As you know better than anybody it is a particularly difficult time for people who are bereaved, particularly when it is so unexpected, and I found the level of support and service admirable, and I am very grateful."

*"Thank you so much for getting back to me on this. You guys never quibble over all my requests and you're always so helpful. It is a credit to the service, thank you!"*

"I just wanted to send a little email to extend my gratitude to yourself and of course the Coroner. The inquest was more comforting than we ever could have hoped for. It was done with such sincerity and was really personal and sensitive."

## Regulation 28 - Reports to Prevent Future Deaths

The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 provides coroners with the duty to make reports to a person, organisation, local authority or government department or agency where the coroner believes that action should be taken to prevent future deaths. A Regulation 28 report can be used before an inquest is held or after the inquest has concluded.

In 2025, the Liverpool & Wirral Coroner Area generated 8 Regulation 28 reports. These were addressed to different NHS bodies and NHS England, the Prison Service, National Police Chiefs Council and individual care homes and GP surgeries. The reports highlighted a wide variety of issues from improving standard operating procedures in healthcare settings, communication between local mental health intervention services, missed opportunities due to the lack of escalation due to gaps in clinical notes and areas for improvements in relation to processes.

The recipient of the report must respond to the coroner within 56 days setting out the proposed action to be taken and a timetable for completing it or explaining why they do not propose to take any action.

All Regulation 28 Prevent Future Death reports and responses are publicly available from the Chief Coroner's website: <https://www.judiciary.uk/subject/prevention-of-future-deaths/>

## Multi-Agency Working

The Coroner's Service has a close working relationship with Merseyside Police who ensure sudden and unexpected deaths are investigated appropriately.

We provide regular training sessions to local hospitals for their new doctors and nurses and accommodate numerous visits to observe inquests in Court from nursing students who greatly appreciate this valuable opportunity.

We deal with hundreds of requests each year from insurance companies and solicitors in relation to life insurance policies and pensions along with litigation enquiries. The inquest archives date back to 1939, so we also deal with many requests from family members tracing their family history.

The Coroner's Service works closely with Emergency Planning Teams in Liverpool and Wirral including the Merseyside Resilience Forum to ensure they have input into plans such as the Merseyside Mass Fatality Plan and the Local Resilience Forum Excess Deaths Plan. We work closely with the Child Death Overview Panel keeping them notified of child deaths, and issues that may relate to Serious Case Reviews and inquest outcomes.

We are aware that part of our role is to prevent future deaths. As a result, we work collaboratively with a number of research projects and provide information to a variety of statutory agencies such as Local Authority public health departments to assist with the prevention of drug related deaths, road traffic accidents, industrial disease and accidents and suicide prevention.

We are also working with the British Heart Foundation pilot to identify genetic factors in sudden cardiac death.

## The Year Ahead

In January 2026, Helen Rimmer was appointed as the full-time Area Coroner. Helen was an Assistant Coroner in the area therefore a recruitment exercise is underway in 2026 to appoint 2 new Assistant Coroners to ensure we have sufficient resilience to provide coronial cover for the complex caseload the area has responsibility for.

### **Public Office (Accountability) Bill 2025**

The Bill introducing “Hillsborough Law” was introduced on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2025. It has been reintroduced on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2026. The Bill still must go through the Lords but there is cross-party support for its implementation and so may receive Royal Assent by the end of 2026 and be implemented before Spring 2027.

“Hillsborough Law” is “a bill to impose a duty on public authorities and public officials to act with candour, transparency and frankness; to make provision for the enforcement of that duty in their dealings with inquiries and investigations; to require public authorities to promote and take steps to maintain ethical conduct within all parts of the authority; to create an offence in relation to public authorities and public officials who mislead the public; to create further offences in relation to the misconduct of persons who hold public office and to abolish the common law offence of misconduct in public office; to make provision enabling persons to participate at inquiries and investigations where the conduct of public authorities may be in issue; and for connected purposes.”

When a public authority is represented as an interested person the family of the deceased will qualify for non-means tested legal aid. According to the Law Society Gazette this will increase the number of cases where legal aid fund a family from 200-400 currently to as many as 11,400 annually in the future.

Legal aid will be funded by taking money from departmental budgets who hold policy on the public authority’s area of work. There will however be no additional funding for local authorities who are required to fund the coroner’s service. Clearly more coroners and courts will be required given the increased work.

In these cases, coroners will be required to serve public authorities with compliance directions to underpin the investigation. Failure to comply will be a criminal offence.

This is the biggest legislative change for the coroner’s service since the Coroner and Justice Act 2009 and will have far reaching cost implications for local authorities.

The legislation is welcomed but the funding and resourcing of new demands will be a challenge.



## TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday 22 October 2026

|               |                                                                |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| REPORT TITLE: | WIRRAL LIBRARIES STRATEGY 2026-2031                            |
| REPORT OF:    | ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: LEISURE, LIBRARIES AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT |

### REPORT SUMMARY

This report presents the proposed final version of Libraries for All: Wirral Libraries Strategy 2026-2031, following approval to consult by the Libraries Sub-Committee on 25 February 2026, and seeks Committee approval to adopt the strategy.

The strategy sets out the direction for the Council's Library Service over the next five years, positioning libraries as welcoming, inclusive and trusted community spaces that support reading, learning, digital access, wellbeing, culture and access to information, while strengthening their role as a community front door to wider Council and partner services.

Public consultation ran from 2 March to 13 April 2026, alongside a dedicated engagement session with Years 7–9 pupils on 8 June 2026. Feedback has been used to test, evidence and refine the strategy's objectives, and is set out in full at Appendix B, alongside how it has been mapped to specific commitments within the strategy. This strategy supports the four priorities of the draft Wirral Plan 2027 - 2031

This is a key decision as it affects all wards across the Borough.

### RECOMMENDATION/S

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the Libraries for All: Wirral Libraries Strategy 2026-2031 for adoption
2. Endorse the Performance Management Framework at Appendix B as the basis for monitoring and reporting delivery
3. Note that an annual performance and delivery plan to give effect to the strategy's commitments for the Committee's future consideration.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The proposed Libraries for All: Wirral Libraries Strategy 2026-2031 Strategy ('the strategy') has been developed and refined through engagement with residents, staff, partners and young people, and reflects a strong mandate for its strategic direction (see Appendix B).
- 1.2 The strategy's direction is also consistent with the Council's emerging corporate priorities. The draft Wirral Plan 2027-31 and the draft Making a Difference for Wirral target operating model both describe a model built around community hubs, four localities, and a single, joined-up front door for residents accessing Council and partner services, closely aligned with this strategy's own commitment to libraries. The draft target operating model also includes an explicit commitment that access to books will increase, notwithstanding the Council's wider financial pressures.
- 1.3 Adoption will allow the Library Service to move from strategy development into delivery, supported by the Performance Management Framework

### **2 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 A Do-Nothing option was not recommended. Not adopting the strategy would leave the Library Service without clear strategic direction and would not reflect the public and youth consultation already undertaken.
- 2.2 Further consultation was considered but not recommended. As set out in Appendix B, the consultation exercise followed a separate, closely timed 2025 process on library provision. A further round within the same period is unlikely to generate materially different evidence and risks compounding consultation fatigue rather than resolving it.

### **3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Libraries Sub-Committee approved a draft strategy for consultation on 25 February 2026. Consultation ran from 2 March to 13 April 2026 via the Council's Wirral Have Your Say platform, receiving 190 responses, alongside a dedicated in-person engagement session with approximately 30 pupils from Years 7–9 on 8 June 2026. Paper copies were also available at all library sites.
- 3.2 Feedback from both exercises has been used to test and refine the draft strategy's objectives. The strategy is structured around eight priorities: Access, Community, Learning, Reading, Wellbeing, Information, Culture and Digital, underpinned by delivery principles covering workforce, quality standards, evidence and governance.
- 3.3 Since the draft strategy was developed, the Council has published in draft the Wirral Plan 2027-31 and Making a Difference for Wirral, its target operating model. This strategy has been reviewed against these emerging documents and identified strong alignment, particularly around community hubs, the four-locality delivery model, and digital and data ambitions. Where appropriate, this alignment has been reflected in the final draft of the strategy. A fuller assessment will follow once both corporate documents are adopted but is not anticipated to result in any material change.
- 3.4 Supporting appendices accompany this report: Appendix A provides the proposed final Library For All Strategy (2026-2031). Appendix B provides an overview of consultation activities and how they map to the strategy's strategic objectives, and Appendix C sets out the Performance Management Framework by which delivery will be measured and reported.

### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from adoption of the strategy. Delivery will take place within existing budgets, with future delivery plans subject to routine budget setting and approval processes.
- 4.2 Where external funding opportunities arise, for example, national schemes such as the Arts Council England Libraries Improvement Fund or Department for Culture, Media and Sport Music-in-Libraries programme, they will be assessed and reported separately as they are pursued.

## **5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all who live, work or study in the borough. Adoption of the strategy supports compliance with this duty.
- 5.2 A lawful consultation must satisfy the following requirement
- consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage.
  - the proposer must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit of intelligent consideration and response;
  - adequate time must be given for consideration and response; and,
  - the product of consultation must be conscientiously considered in finalising any statutory proposals.
- 5.3 This requirement can be satisfied in this case by the report taking into account the consultation responses to the strategy and by members considering the outcome of the consultation and the recommendations within this report.

## **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 Delivery of the strategy will take place within existing staffing structures, including those established through future service restructure.
- 6.2 Any future changes to staffing, ICT or assets arising from delivery will be subject to separate reports and approvals as required.

## **7 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 There is a risk that public confidence in the strategy's ability to deliver improvement, recorded at 48% in the consultation, is not matched by visible progress. This is mitigated through the Performance Management Framework, which sets out how progress will be measured, by whom, and reported to Members on an annual basis. Libraries' performance is also captured within the Leisure, Libraries and Customer performance report presented to this committee.
- 7.2 The service is also developing a Wirral Library Service Standards through which service delivery will be monitored, managed and assured. This document will be our contract with residents, providing a guarantee on customer experience, how library spaces look and feel, and how the Council will seek continuous improvement over the strategy period and beyond. This will sit alongside the Performance Management Framework to provide day-to-day accountability.
- 7.3 There is a risk that consultation fatigue affects the quality of future engagement. This will be mitigated through more varied and targeted engagement methods going forward, including continued use of in-person and youth-specific approaches and ongoing customer feedback loops maintained through regular feedback.
- 7.4 The Council's draft target operating model anticipates a reduction in the overall number of buildings it maintains, and an assessment of alternative delivery models for some services, as part of wider financial sustainability measures. This strategy is designed to mitigate that risk to libraries by positioning library sites as active contributors to the Council's emerging community hub network, rather than services operating outside it, and by evidencing the value of libraries against the same outcomes the Council's wider transformation is seeking to deliver.
- 7.5 Without a current Library Strategy, the Council faces a significant risk of being unable to clearly demonstrate how it is meeting its duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. A lack of strategic direction can weaken the evidence base for service decisions, reduce opportunities to attract external funding and partnerships, hinder long term planning and investment, and make it more difficult to align library services with wider Council priorities such as tackling inequalities, improving health and wellbeing, supporting digital inclusion, and strengthening communities. It may also expose the Council to increased scrutiny from residents, stakeholders and government if service changes are proposed or if the adequacy of the library service is challenged.

## **8 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Consultation on the draft strategy ran from 2 March to 13 April 2026, receiving 190 responses, alongside a dedicated engagement session with Years 7–9 pupils on 8 June 2026. Full methodology, findings and their mapping to the strategy are set out at Appendix B and Appendix D.
- 8.2 Consultation confirmed strong support for the strategy's direction: 68% of respondents agreed it reflects the role libraries should play in Wirral's future, 96% said it was important that libraries remain welcoming and trusted spaces, and 85% supported libraries acting as a community front door to Council and partner services.
- 8.3 Confidence in the strategy delivering improvements was comparatively lower, at 48%. In context, the consultation followed a separate 2025 exercise on library provision and potential closures. This proximity is considered likely to have impacted some of the response to this strategic consultation as risk of closures was noted on a number of responses.
- 8.4 A mapping exercise was undertaken where each theme, barrier and priority raised through consultation is tested against the strategy's objectives. Every issue raised by residents and young people is addressed by an existing or strengthened commitment. The strategy's aspirations and priorities score comprehensively against the evidence gathered, the task is now one of delivery and visible progress.

## **9 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone.
- 9.2 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) completed for the consultation phase has been reviewed and updated to reflect the final strategy. The EIA can be found here <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

## **10 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report. The strategy commits to embedding environmental sustainability in line with the Council's climate commitments, and previous delivery examples already evidence environmentally themed programming such as Green Bibliofest, Green Explorers and partnerships with Birkenhead Park. Libraries also support public education on climate change and sustainability.

## **11 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 Libraries contribute to community wealth by providing free, accessible spaces that support learning, skills development, wellbeing and local connection. The strategy supports inclusive growth through place-based delivery and partnership working, evidenced through service led and partner led programmes.

## **12 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### **REPORT AUTHOR: James Roberts**

Senior Manager, Libraries & Information Services

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Libraries For All (2026-2031)

*The PDF file may not be suitable to view for people with disabilities, users of assistive technology or mobile phone devices. Please contact [jamesroberts@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:jamesroberts@wirral.gov.uk) if you would like this document in an accessible format.*

Appendix B – Consultation Findings & Strategic Mapping

Appendix C – Performance Management Framework

Appendix D – 2026 Wirral Libraries Strategy Consultation

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- DRAFT Libraries for All: Wirral Libraries Strategy 2026-2031, Libraries Sub-Committee, 25 February 2026

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- Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in accordance with its Terms of Reference:

- (a) for customer and community contact services, including various offices and meeting points, customer contact centres and advice and transaction services
- (e) for delivery of the authority's library and museums services, including but not limited to art galleries, historic buildings and their gardens and the functions of the Council regarding public records, and the Council's

## SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| <b>Council Meeting</b>                                                                                       | <b>Date</b>       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Libraries Sub-Committee, DRAFT Libraries for All: Wirral Libraries Strategy 2026-2031                        | 25 February 2026  |
| Libraries Sub-Committee, Library Strategy Update                                                             | 20 November 2025  |
| Libraries Sub-Committee, Libraries Consultation Outcomes                                                     | 14 October 2025   |
| Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee, Proposed New Operating Model for Wirral Libraries Service | 18 September 2025 |

# Libraries for All

## Wirral Libraries Strategy 2026-2031

“Wirral Libraries will be welcoming, inclusive and trusted spaces at the heart of our communities. They will be places of connection and creativity, with access to reading, digital resources, learning opportunities and trusted information. Our libraries will be the community’s front door to the Council.”

**Libraries for All: Wirral Libraries Strategy 2026-2031 sets out the direction for Wirral's Library Service over the next five years. Libraries are among the most trusted and accessible civic anchors in our communities. They are free, welcoming spaces at the heart of our neighbourhoods, used by people of all ages and backgrounds.**

For many residents, libraries are not only places to read or study, but safe spaces to connect, learn, and seek information on Council services. For some, library staff are the first, and often the only, face from the Council they engage with. With evolving community need, widening inequalities and increasing reliance on digital services, libraries have a vital role to play in supporting our ambition for stronger communities. This strategy represents a place-based, partnership-led approach that positions libraries as vital, trusted community anchors that connects residents to reading, learning, wellbeing, culture and wider Council and partner services. Conversations with our communities, staff and partners highlight a strong public attachment to local libraries, alongside clear expectations for modern, welcoming spaces, clearer communication, basic digital support and better collaboration with partners across health, education, children's services and the voluntary and community sector. This Strategy will build the foundations for those aspirations.

This strategy is developed within the context of Wirral Council's wider transformation. The Wirral Plan 2027-31 and Making a Difference for Wirral (the Council's target operating model) set the case for change against significant challenges in the borough. Within that context, the Council has made a commitment that access to books will increase, setting a clear mandate for this strategy's ambition, and the standard this strategy is designed to deliver against.



**Councillor Jennifer Johnson,  
Chair Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure  
Committee**

## How We Will Deliver

Working differently across the Council, with partners and communities, using a place-based and systems-thinking approach.

The following principles set out how we will deliver this strategy, building on what we've heard from residents, staff and partners whilst recognising the financial and operational realities facing the Council.

### Working as part of a Wider System

- Aligned with Libraries Connected Universal Offers
- Connected to other Council services
- Integrated into community hub models
- Aligned with partners across health, education, culture and VCS sector

### Governance, Delivery and Accountability

- Establish a strategy delivery and oversight structure
- Publish regular monitoring updates
- Refresh delivery plans annually to reflect learning, resources and priorities

### Our Workforce: Skills, Confidence, Culture

- Workforce development that supports customer service, digital support, inclusion and partnership working
- Embed leadership, progression and succession
- A structure that is fit for purpose and futureproof

### Quality, Standards and Continuous Improvement

- Develop Wirral Library Service Standards
- Core offer expectations
- Embed standards through training
- Ensure service remains legally compliant, equitable and sustainable

### Evidence, Insight and Measuring What Matters

- Strengthen use of data to understand need
- Combine quantitative and qualitative evidence and stories of impact
- Evidence-based decisions

### Sustainable and Responsible Use of Resources

- Deploy resources where they have greatest impact
- An estate that is safe and compliant in line with the Corporate Landlord Model
- Embed environmental sustainability in line with climate commitments

### A Place-Based Approach

- A service shaped by local needs for local communities
- Co-located with other services
- Partnership delivery
- Outreach and pop-up provision
- Community-led activity

### Operating Within Budgets

- Operate within agreed budgets and maintain accountability
- Deliver transformation that improves efficiency
- Explore invest-to-save and external funding approaches to support long-term sustainability

## Making it easier for everyone to use their local library

We want Wirral's libraries to be welcoming, accessible and easy to use for everyone. Residents have told us they value libraries as safe, familiar places in their neighbourhoods and that practical barriers such as opening hours, accessibility, confidence and awareness can affect whether they use them.

Through this strategy, we want libraries to be the community front door: places people feel comfortable walking into, whether to borrow a book, use a computer, study, attend an activity, or ask for support.

**We will:**

- continue to invest in safe, accessible and welcoming library spaces
- explore flexible access models and improved use of technology where appropriate
- remove barriers to access wherever possible, including cost and confidence barriers
- improve how we promote what libraries offer so more residents know how to use them

**We want to explore:**

- how opening hours, layouts and technology can better reflect how people use libraries today, including all day opening at Central libraries
- how library opening hours and service delivery align with the Council's four-locality model, so provision reflects where residents are being encouraged to access services locally
- how library layouts can better serve different age groups, including distinct space for teenage and young adult use
- regular and consistent staffing at all sites to support a relational service offer
- how we reduce barriers for residents through inclusive and accessible environments
- how libraries can be welcoming entry points to wider Council and partner services

## 2 Libraries for All – For Community

### Helping people connect to their community

Wirral's libraries are already great places where people meet, connect and spend time together. For some residents, the library may be one of the few places they meet regularly, or the first trusted community space they find when new to an area.

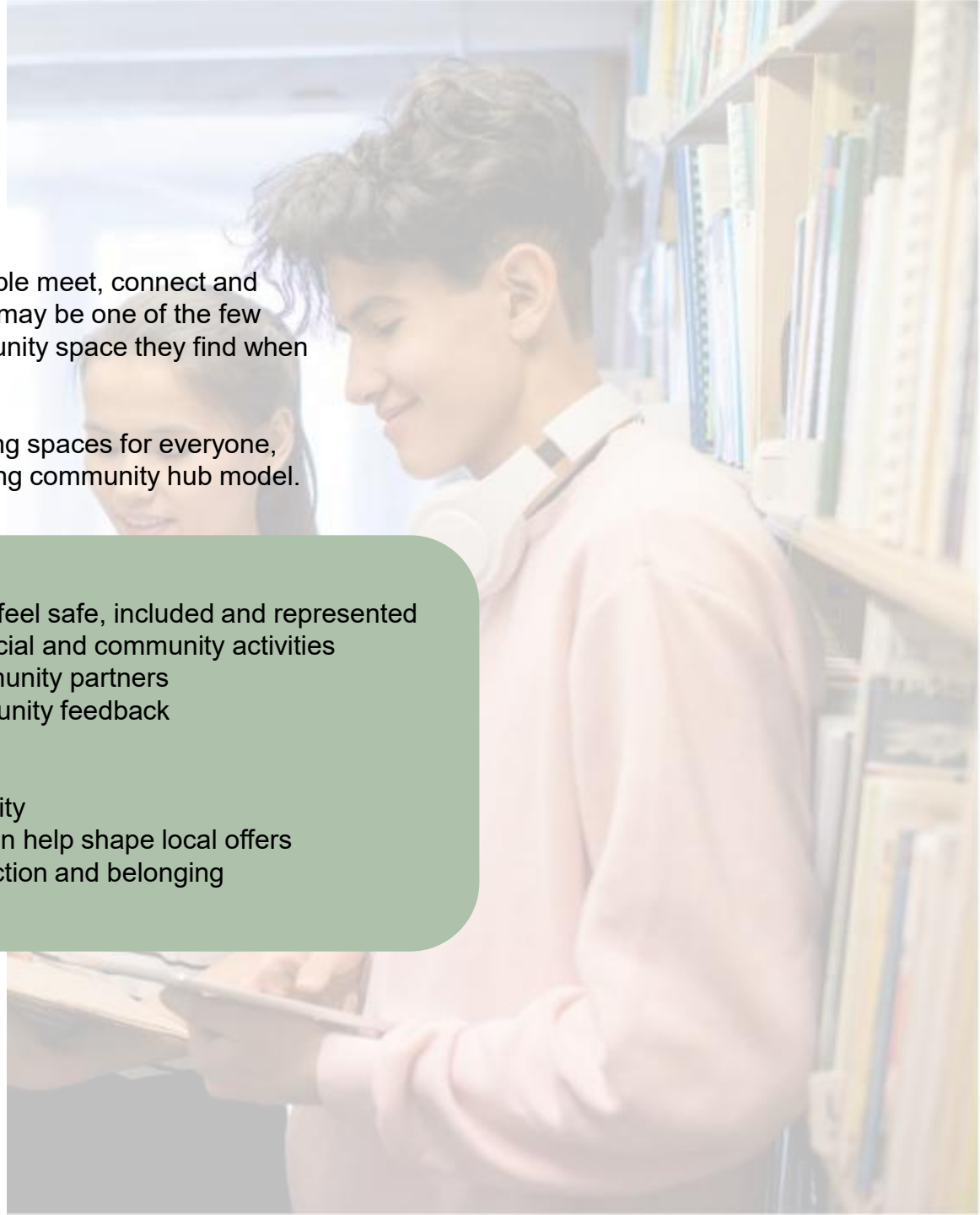
We want libraries to continue to be friendly, welcoming spaces for everyone, and to play a stronger role as part of Wirral's emerging community hub model.

#### **We will:**

- provide warm, welcoming spaces where people feel safe, included and represented
- work with community organisations to deliver social and community activities
- strengthen the role of Friends Groups and community partners
- improve how we listen to and act on local community feedback

#### **We want to explore:**

- how libraries can host more community-led activity
- how Friends Groups, volunteers and partners can help shape local offers
- how libraries can support neighbourhood connection and belonging



Giving everyone space to learn, study and develop skills

Wirral's libraries are important places for both formal and informal learning. They offer quiet study spaces, access to information, and support for people developing skills at all stages of life.

We want Wirral's libraries to support learning from early years through to later life, working closely with schools, colleges and partners.

**We will:**

- maintain and improve welcoming study and learning spaces
- work with education partners to support reading, literacy and information skills
- provide equitable access to learning opportunities and resources, both physical and digital
- explore opportunities to support exam preparation and independent learning

**We want to explore:**

- how libraries can better support students and adult learners
- how learning spaces can meet different needs, including group and quiet study
- how libraries can support skills development alongside partners
- how libraries can improve digital literacy and online safety awareness
- how to embed ongoing co-creation with children and young people in shaping library spaces and provision

### Encouraging a lifelong love of reading

Reading remains at the heart of what we do. We know that reading for pleasure supports wellbeing, confidence and life chances, particularly for children and young people.

We want every resident to be able to enjoy reading in ways that work for them, whether through books, audiobooks, digital content or shared reading activities.

**We will:**

- continue to support early years reading through core and wrap-around activities
- continue with reading for pleasure pathways for children and young people
- provide outreach, stock curation and management support to our Community Partner and Outreach libraries
- refresh our stock management policy and strengthen the use of stock management software solutions
- increase promotion of our collections, both physical and digital (BorrowBox)
- promote reading groups, shared reading and informal reading activities
- work with partners to reach communities with lower engagement

**We want to explore:**

- how to strengthen early language and family reading support
- how to build on our core programme of activities to enhance our reading offer
- how to encourage reading for pleasure among children, young people and adults
- how collections can better reflect Wirral's communities and attract new audiences
- how we can expand our digital library offer through new technologies



### Supporting health, wellbeing and social connection

Wirral's libraries already support wellbeing by providing calm spaces, trusted information and opportunities for social connection. Increasingly, they are places where people come for support, reassurance and signposting.

We want to strengthen the role of libraries in prevention, wellbeing and early help, working alongside health and community partners.

#### **We will:**

- provide trusted, inclusive spaces that support mental and emotional wellbeing
- work with partners to deliver wellbeing and social activities
- support staff to confidently signpost residents to appropriate services
- ensure libraries remain representative and inclusive environments

#### **We want to explore:**

- how libraries can support people experiencing loneliness or isolation
- how wellbeing activities can be co-designed with communities
- how libraries can connect people to wider support earlier
- how libraries can demonstrate prevention and social value impacts

### Helping people access information, advice and services

For many residents, our libraries are the first place they go for help. Library staff support people with digital access, information and navigating services, often acting as a first point of contact between residents and the Council. This aligns directly with the Council's wider ambition, set out in Making a Difference for Wirral, for residents to access advice, guidance and local services quickly through a single, joined-up front door.

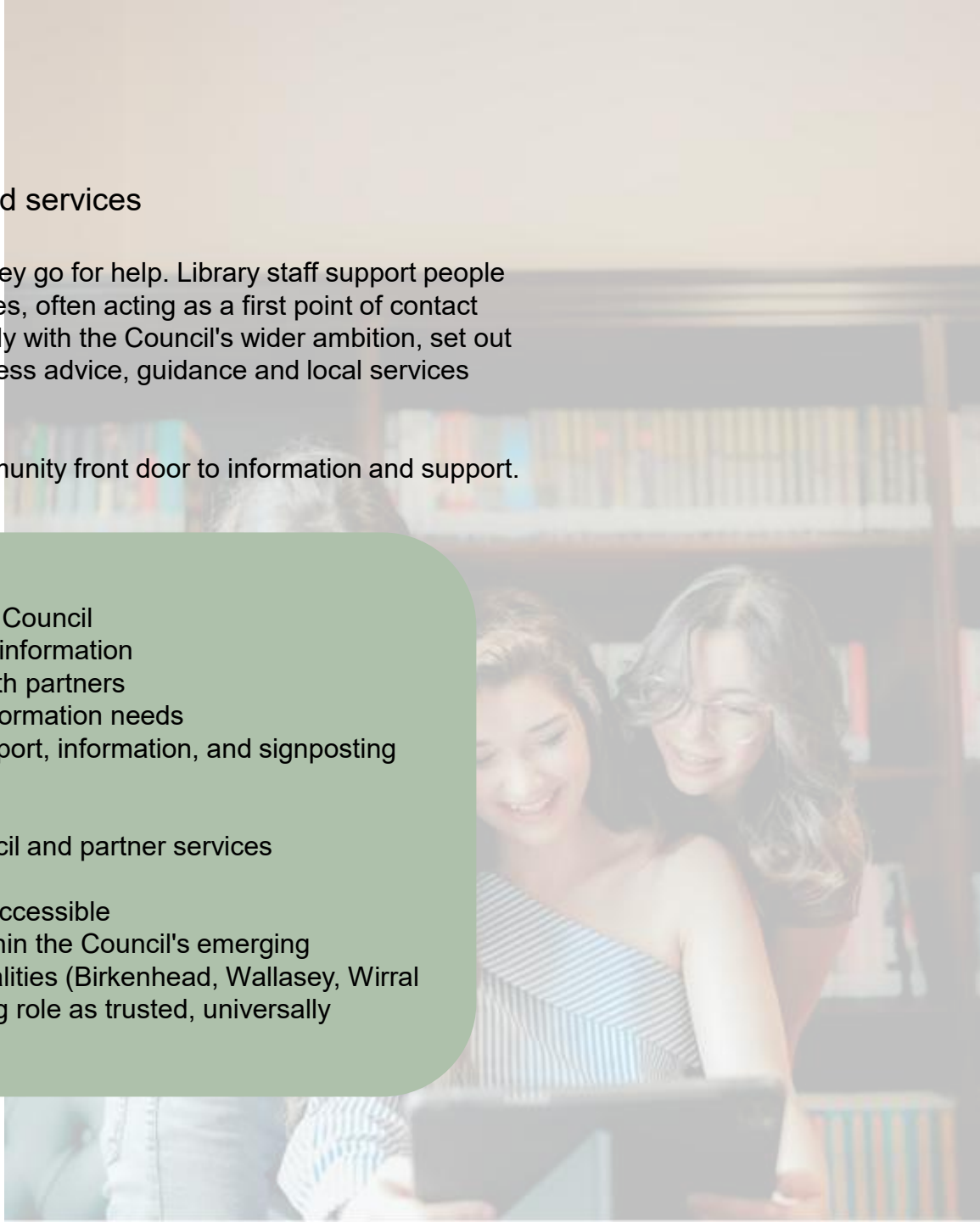
We want libraries to be recognised as a trusted community front door to information and support.

#### **We will:**

- continue to be the first line of information for the Council
- support residents to access online services and information
- strengthen referral and signposting pathways with partners
- improve staff tools and confidence to support information needs
- ensure libraries remain safe spaces to seek support, information, and signposting

#### **We want to explore:**

- how libraries can better support access to Council and partner services
- how to strengthen assisted digital support
- how to ensure information is clear, trusted and accessible
- how library sites can act as anchor locations within the Council's emerging community hub network across Wirral's four localities (Birkenhead, Wallasey, Wirral South, Wirral West), building on libraries' existing role as trusted, universally accessible community spaces



### Celebrating creativity, heritage and local identity

Wirral libraries are well-placed to celebrate Wirral's creativity, heritage and stories and provide arts and cultural experiences. They are accessible cultural spaces that resonate with people who may not engage with traditional cultural and arts venues.

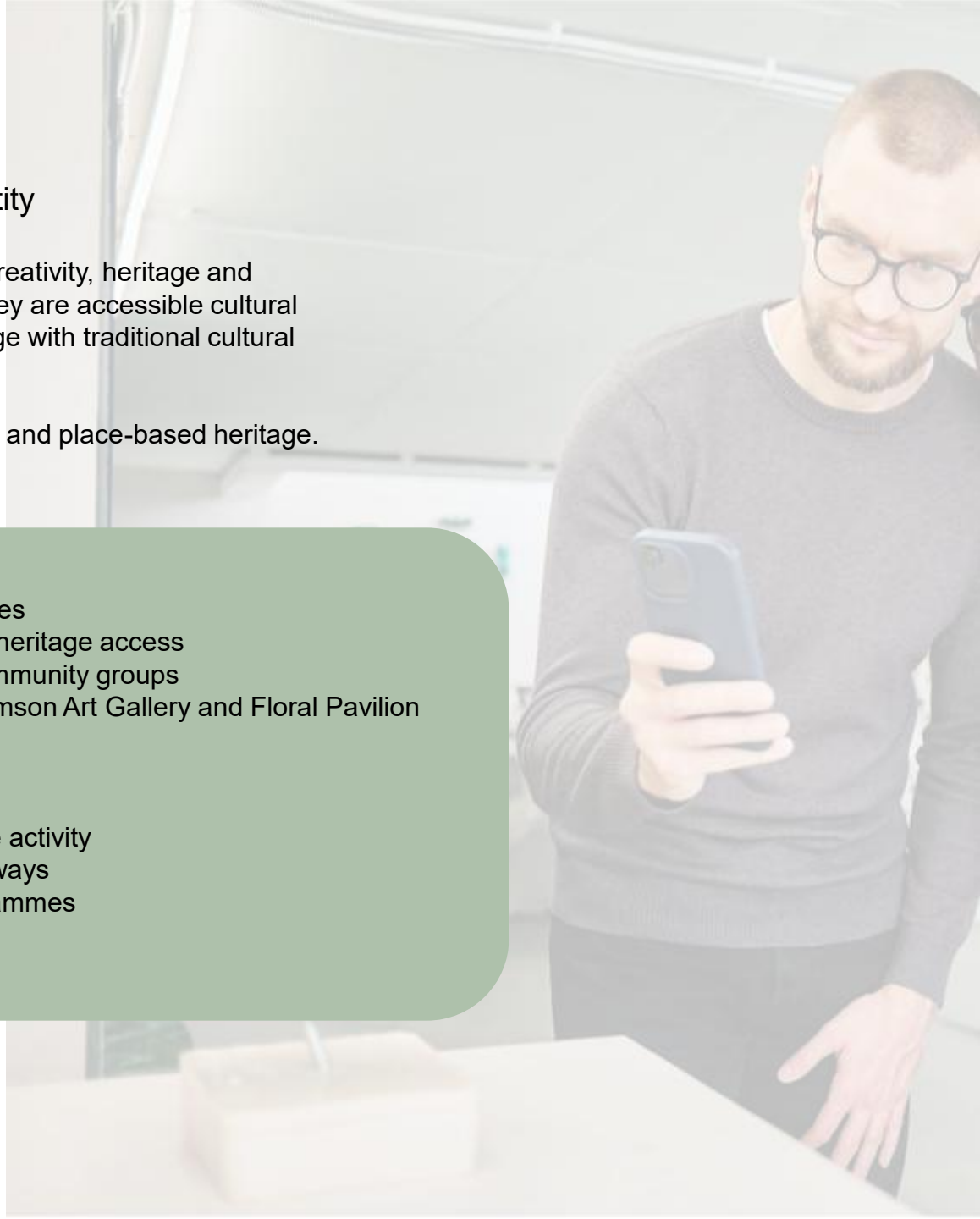
We want libraries to play a visible role in local culture and place-based heritage.

**We will:**

- deliver exhibitions, events and activities in libraries
- support and promote local history, archives and heritage access
- work with creative practitioners, schools and community groups
- support our cultural partners including the Williamson Art Gallery and Floral Pavilion
- contribute to wider borough cultural initiatives

**We want to explore:**

- how libraries can host more cultural and creative activity
- how local heritage can be shared in accessible ways
- how communities can help shape cultural programmes
- national funding and partnership opportunities



### Supporting digital access, skills and confidence

Digital access is now essential to everyday life. Residents are increasingly expected to use online services to manage their health, finances, employment and housing, including Council services and tools such as the NHS App. Some residents face barriers to accessing data, devices or essential digital skills, increasing the risk of digital exclusion.

Through this strategy, we want to strengthen our role and position libraries as the community front door for digital support.

**We will:**

- provide free access to computers, Wi-Fi and digital resources
- support residents with basic digital tasks and accessing online services
- offer basic digital skills courses and support through our partners and IT Volunteers
- strengthen libraries' role as a first line of information and support for digital customer service needs
- work with Council services and partners to align libraries with wider assisted digital pathways

**We want to explore:**

- how libraries can best support residents who experience digital exclusion or lack digital confidence
- our role in helping residents build confidence and critical judgement around AI-generated content and misinformation, as part of our wider digital support offer
- how basic digital skills support can be delivered consistently across the borough
- how libraries can help residents navigate increasing reliance on online public services

# Case Study 1

## The Carers Connection Centre

Run weekly at Greasby Library in partnership with Wirral Carers Alliance, the Carer Connection Centre brings carers and community members together with health, social care and voluntary sector partners under one roof. In its first 13 weeks it supported 124 carers across wellbeing, practical, financial and employment-related support.

*I am so grateful for the support. I was at my wits end when I came to the session last week. I didn't know what to do. Now I have got lots of advice and I have support in place and help when I need it.* – **Visitor, Carer Connection Centre, Greasby Library**

*"I have a new place to get help and support. I have come to several of the sessions as there are so many services and things to learn about caring and my own wellbeing."* – **Visitor, Carer Connection Centre, Greasby Library**

*"We arrived to a friendly face, a lovely cuppa and lots of help. We have received great support."* – **Visitor, Carer Connection Centre, Greasby Library**

# CoLLaB



**Community opportunities, Living, Learning, aspirations, Beginnings**

## Case Study 2

### Green Bibliofest

Green Bibliofest took place across summer 2024 as part of Wirral Borough of Culture, bringing families into libraries and green spaces for a festival of storytelling, creativity, nature and sustainability. Wirral Libraries, Birkenhead Park and Wirral Country Park joined forces to deliver 48 events, including a performance from a premier learning disability arts group, storytelling, den-making and craft sessions, reaching 650 children and 350 adults across the summer holidays.

*"Being able to see a live theatrical performance in such a relaxed and familiar environment was wonderfully refreshing... I've had the best day with my friends."* - **Attendee of Green Bibliofest Event**

*"The children of Mersey Park are extremely fortunate to have been invited to Birkenhead Library... The performance of Birdie was attended by some of our Eco committee and Hedgehog committee who are working hard in school and in the local community to preserve our planet."* – **Mersey Park Primary School**

*"They absolutely loved the combination of dance and storytelling. It was something they'd never seen before and my little boy was really inspired by it. The team running the event were so kind and accommodating and I would really recommend this event to others."* – **Parent, "Greatest Robot" performance**

*"A lovely family activity for all ages. My two year old loved carrying around his 'pirate map' and my eight and three year old loved exploring the park looking for the passwords. My eight year old especially loved the pond dipping and nature aspects. It was a perfect activity."* – **Parent, Treasure Hunt, Birkenhead Park**

# Case Study 3

## Library Events & Activities

Wirral's libraries run a wide range of events and activities that bring people together and support wellbeing, reading, culture and digital access for residents of all ages. From Bounce and Rhyme and Shared Reading groups, to the Carer Connection Centre, Knit and Natter, Book Clubs, and programmes like Stories of Nature and the Summer Reading Challenge. Some are run by Wirral Libraries directly, others in partnership with local organisations, but all are shaped by local need. This feedback reflects the difference this makes, in residents' own words.

*"Going to Knit and Natter and my other library groups helped me through a really difficult period in my life. The staff have shown me huge kindness, and I've made real friendships there – it's the one place I've consistently found connection and support when I needed it most."* – **Member, Knit and Natter & Book Club**

*The shared reading sessions have been brilliant for the people we support. It's helped their reading skills, but it's also given them the chance to use their imaginations and really think about what they're reading. They enjoy it enormously, and everyone, our group and the wider public, makes them feel genuinely welcome."* – **Day centre coordinator, Shared Reading Group**

*"A little girl in my care had always found it hard to join in with group activities. During the storytelling session, she was drawn right in – for the first time, she moved to sit with the group and started pointing at the characters in the book as it was read. It meant so much to see her engage like that."* – **Foster carer, on a storytelling session**

*"My family and I attended Birkenhead library today for the IT drop-in. My Dad needed support with an email issue... the support and kindness really went a long way and my Dad's email problem is now all sorted."* – **Customer feedback, Digital Support**

## Case Study 4

### Summer Reading Challenge

Each summer, Wirral Libraries runs the Summer Reading Challenge, part of a national programme delivered with The Reading Agency, encouraging children to keep reading through the school holidays. Children pick their own books, track their progress, and work towards stickers and a certificate, with support from library staff along the way. The feedback below reflects what families told us it meant to them.

*"We love the summer reading challenge and we love seeing the friendly library staff each visit. They make us feel welcome to visit."*

*"Yes, this reading challenge has certainly made a difference, both children are motivated to pick a book to read before bed!"*

*"The reading challenge helps keep my children interested in reading. The library staff are always so helpful and encouraging."*

*"Really great way to encourage them to read, so lovely, a great activity especially in summer."*

*"Our boys really enjoyed it, completing the challenge (even more) and it made us explore the library."*

## Current Service Provision

Wirral Libraries deliver a statutory public library service through a network of libraries and community-based provision designed to meet local need. This model reflects the borough's geography, communities and patterns of use, and supports access to library services in a range of settings.

This strategy underpins the delivery across Wirral's library network, which consists of four complementary types of provision. Including:

### Central Libraries

Wirral has four Central Libraries, which form the core of the borough's library service. These are larger sites providing:

- extensive physical and digital collections;
- community, study and event spaces;
- a broad programme of activities; and
- specialist reference and information services.

Birkenhead Central Library is the borough's main reference library, with additional local reference provision at Wallasey and Bebington Central Libraries. Bebington Central Library houses the service's Home Reader offer.

### Branch Libraries

Wirral has six Branch Libraries, providing accessible local library services within neighbourhoods. Branch Libraries:

- offer smaller, locally-focused collections;
- provide core lending, digital access and information support; and
- deliver a core programme of regular activities

Branch Libraries play an important role in supporting everyday access to reading, learning and community connection.

## Current Service Provision (cont.)

### Community Partner Libraries

Wirral currently has two Community Partner Libraries: Seacombe, delivered with Seacombe Family Hub; and St James, delivered with North Birkenhead Development Trust.

These libraries operate within trusted community settings and are supported by Wirral Libraries. They receive:

- professional input from Wirral Libraries, including advice, stock management, stock support and community outreach; and
- focus on delivering library outcomes through trusted and embedded community settings

Through this strategy, the Council will continue to work closely with our partners via agreements to deliver the best outcomes for communities.

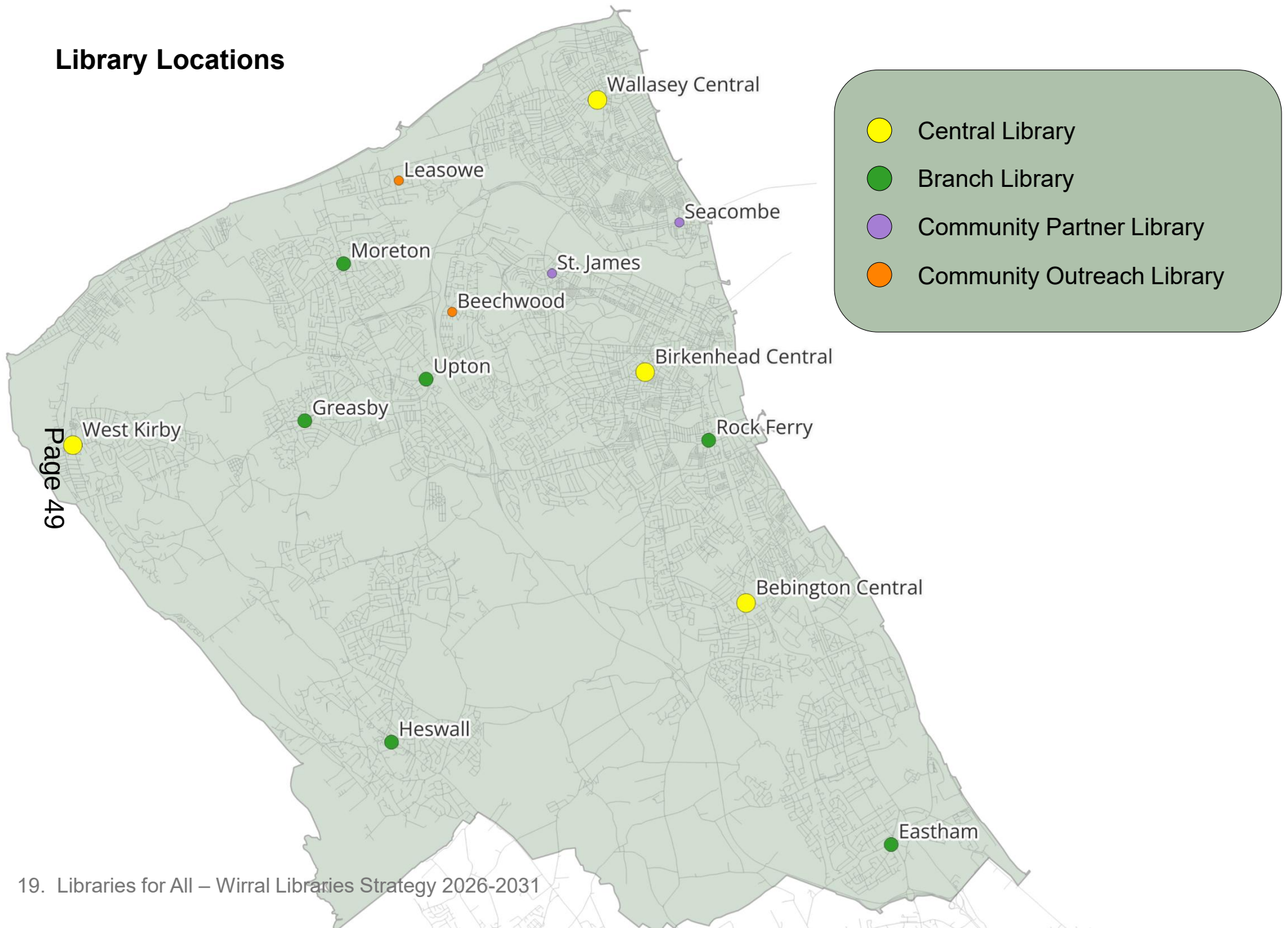
### Community Outreach Libraries

Wirral has two Community Outreach Libraries: Beechwood and Leasowe. Community Outreach Libraries are smaller, informal library offers delivered within established community venues and managed by community partners. They receive:

- professional input from Wirral Libraries, including advice and offline stock support; and
- focus on delivering library outcomes through trusted, embedded community settings.

This approach recognises the value of using familiar local spaces to reach communities who may not engage with traditional library buildings.

# Library Locations



## 2024/25 Performance

**10** Staffed  
Libraries plus  
Home Reader  
Service

**2** Community  
Partner Libraries

**2** Community  
Outreach  
Libraries

Active borrowers:  
**18,170**

No. of physical  
loan  
transactions:  
**528,185**

No. of e-loan  
transactions:  
**84,686**

No. of events:  
**1,622**

No. of adults  
attending:  
**13,818**

No. of children  
attending:  
**17,877**

PC logins:  
**34,106**

Unique client  
device usage of  
Wi-Fi: **22,163**



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## **Appendix B – Consultation Findings & Strategic Mapping**

### **Purpose**

This appendix sets out the methodology and headline findings from the two consultation exercises undertaken to inform the final version of Libraries for All: Wirral Libraries Strategy 2026-2031 and shows how that feedback has been used to test, evidence and refine the strategy's objectives.

### **Methodology**

#### **Public consultation**

Consultation on the draft strategy ran for six weeks, from 2 March to 13 April 2026, via the Council's Wirral Have Your Say platform, with paper copies also made available for residents at all library sites. 190 responses were received in total: 134 (70.5%) online and 56 (29.5%) by paper. Questions covered current library use, access and barriers, community and wellbeing, learning and reading, digital access, and priorities for the next five years, alongside standard monitoring questions.

#### **Youth consultation**

Alongside the public consultation, a dedicated in-person engagement session was held with approximately 30 pupils from Years 7–9 at a Wirral secondary school on 8 June 2026. This ran as a two-hour facilitated session combining group discussion with a poster and sticky-note feedback exercise, structured around three guided questions: what pupils value about libraries, what they don't, and what they wish libraries offered. This method was chosen deliberately, in recognition that the standard survey format used for the public consultation is less likely to engage this age group in a meaningful way.

#### **Interpreting the findings**

This consultation followed a consultation exercise carried out between May and July 2025 on a proposed new library operating model, which included the potential closure or transfer of a number of sites. That proposal was not taken forward by Members in September 2025, and no library closures form part of this strategy. However, awareness of the 2025 process remained high among some respondents to the current consultation, and a proportion of free-text responses referenced concerns about site closures despite this falling outside the scope of the questions asked. This is likely to reflect the proximity and profile of the earlier exercise rather than the content of the current proposals, and it is reasonable to expect that consecutive consultation on library provision within a short period may have affected

both the volume and character of responses received. This context has been taken into account in interpreting the findings below.

It should also be noted that public consultation respondents skewed toward existing, regular library users and toward older age groups: 93% had used a library in the previous 12 months, and over half of respondents were aged 55 or over. This means the evidence gathered speaks more directly to the experience of current members than to the barriers facing non-users, lapsed members or younger residents, a gap the youth consultation was designed to help address, and one that will continue to inform how future engagement is carried out through the life of this strategy.

### Headline findings – public consultation

Libraries remain well-used and highly valued: 93% of respondents had used a physical library in the past year, and 73% use one at least monthly. The strategic direction proposed was strongly endorsed, 68% agreed it reflects the role libraries should play in Wirral's future, 96% said it was important that libraries remain welcoming and trusted spaces, and 85% supported libraries acting as a community front door to Council and partner services. Confidence that the strategy will deliver improvement was more mixed, at 48% confident or very confident, support for the direction is clear, but residents want to see it translated into visible change.

| Finding                                                                               | Evidence                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Opening hours are the top barrier to greater use                                      | 52% (Q9); cited in 39% of Q11 responses                                    |
| Strong support for flexible hours and use of technology                               | 70% support (Q10)                                                          |
| Better promotion & advertising                                                        | 19% of Q11 agree this would enhance general awareness of the library offer |
| Physical accessibility is a key barrier to access (transport, parking, lifts / ramps) | 14.3% of Q11                                                               |
| Access satisfaction is mixed                                                          | 59% satisfied; 24% dissatisfied (Q8)                                       |
| Strong support for the community front door role                                      | 85% (Q7); 88% for online service access (Q22)                              |
| Support for community-led and partner activity                                        | 93% (Q13)                                                                  |
| Awareness and promotion of services is a gap                                          | 29% cite lack of awareness (Q9); top-ranked Q19 improvement                |
| Engaged, knowledgeable staff strongly valued                                          | 28.3% of Q19; 11.4% of Q11                                                 |
| Reading and borrowing remains the core value of libraries                             | 93% rate it important (Q15)                                                |
| Stock coverage and range is a concern                                                 | 21% of Q17; recurring theme in Q11 / Q19                                   |

| <b>Finding</b>                                                  | <b>Evidence</b>                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Role in wellbeing and reducing isolation strongly valued        | 96% (Q18); wellness / support groups the top Q19 request |
| Digital access is seen as essential                             | 95% (Q20); 96% want in-person digital support (Q21)      |
| Withdrawal of digital reference resources, illustrative concern | Raised in free text, Q9                                  |
| Culture and heritage valued alongside digital access            | 34% value local history, 33.7% culture (Q15)             |
| Confidence the strategy will deliver improvement                | 48% confident or very confident (Q24)                    |

### **Headline findings – youth consultation**

Young people valued libraries as calm, inclusive, judgement-free spaces, and were clear that current provision does not consistently reflect their needs as teenagers / young adults, both in terms of stock and activity offer, and in terms of how spaces are laid out and designed.

| <b>Finding</b>                                                            | <b>Illustrative comment</b>                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Libraries valued as calm, safe, inclusive spaces                          | "Good for people who struggle with money and can't afford books"                             |
| Stock skews toward young children or adults, with a thin teen / YA range  | "Often feel like they appeal to either very young children or adults, not much in between"   |
| Demand for homework and study support                                     | "Study groups for help with homework"                                                        |
| Demand for teen-specific clubs and activities                             | "Tots and elderly book clubs, but none for teens?"                                           |
| Demand for a wider variety of space types                                 | "Some people need noise; some people need quiet"                                             |
| SEND accessibility raised as a concern                                    | "Support with special needs" / "not really accessible for people with learning disabilities" |
| Desire for an ongoing role in shaping libraries, not one-off consultation | Reflected across group discussion                                                            |

## How these findings have informed the strategy

| Consultation theme                                 | Strategy area        | How it has been used                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Opening hours, physical accessibility              | Access               | Evidence existing "explore flexible opening hours" commitment; gives it a clear mandate |
| Age-appropriate space design (public & youth)      | Access               | New objective "...distinct space for teenage and young adult use"                       |
| Community front door, online service access        | Information          | Evidence existing commitment; strongest single mandate in the consultation              |
| Awareness / promotion gap                          | Community            | Evidence existing "improve promotion" commitment                                        |
| Engaged staff                                      | Community; Workforce | Evidence existing commitment                                                            |
| Reading / borrowing centrality; stock currency     | Reading              | Evidence existing commitment "how collections reflect Wirral's communities"             |
| Wellbeing / isolation role                         | Wellbeing            | Evidence existing commitment; no change needed                                          |
| Digital access essential; in-person support valued | Digital              | Evidence existing commitment across all objectives                                      |
| Culture / heritage valued                          | Culture              | Evidence existing commitment                                                            |
| Youth co-creation appetite                         | Learning / Community | New objective, "ongoing co-creation"                                                    |
| Confidence in delivery (48%)                       | Whole strategy       | Adopted as a baseline delivery-confidence indicator                                     |
| Respondent demographic skew                        | Evidence base        | Reinforces the outreach and reach-gap objectives                                        |

## **Annex: Youth Consultation Feedback Summary & Headlines**

*Representation from Years 7–9 (approximately 30 pupils and a teacher); two-hour session with group work / discussion and feedback via posters and sticky notes, structured around guided questions. 8 June 2026, 1–3pm.*

### **Something you value about libraries?**

- Quiet
- Sitting areas
- There are some nice books to read
- Good for people who struggle with money and can't afford books
- It's usually relaxing and peaceful
- It's quite quiet
- Smells really nice
- A multitude of new and interesting books which can introduce you to new genres
- Usually quiet so I can put earphones on and listen to music
- Good for people who can't study at home or in loud spaces
- A lot of options
- No time limit
- Something for everyone
- Good for kids and the older generation
- Offering a place where people can relax
- Help them to read
- I liked the reading challenges
- That they exist (not kidding)
- Helping people have bright futures and good careers
- I like how quiet libraries are as its like a place to wind down
- I like the Liverpool libraries as they are large and have many variations of books
- The ability to borrow books, comfortable seating, range of travel guides and books from the 'for dummies' series

### **Something you don't like about libraries?**

- They don't always have the books I like
- Sometimes too quiet
- Bit overwhelming sometimes to have so many books
- Not enough genres
- There usually isn't many books for teens
- Not really accessible for people with learning disabilities
- Looks old fashioned and not creative
- For my local library there isn't many books for my age range
- Often feel like they appeal to either very young children or adults – not much in between

### **Something you wish libraries did offer?**

- Study groups for help with homework
- More activities for our age
- Tots and elderly book clubs, but none for teens?
- Libraries could re-stock on newer books
- Assistance with our homework
- Support with special needs
- Study sessions
- I would like more graphic fantasy novels
- More books for teens
- More books for 13-25
- Clubs for each genre
- Art club for books
- I personally would like more comic / manga books with varieties
- In the future, books on career paths / how to get a job and stuff like that
- Newer, more modern books
- Books for people with learning disabilities

- Bring library lessons back
- I wish libraries offered more clubs or reading sessions for children my age
- More western books
- More books from foreign authors
- Wide range of comics and graphic novels for all ages, more non-fiction books based on pop culture, more nonfiction about politics, more non-fiction about graphic design and marketing
- Better education about libraries
- More things of devices
- Different spaces needed
- Some people need noise, some people need quiet

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## Appendix C – Performance Management Framework

### Quality and Consistency

| Success looks like                                                 | How we'll know                                                   | Who leads                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| A clearly defined core library offer, available across the borough | Wirral Library Service Standards Framework developed and adopted | Team Leaders;<br>Head of Service;<br>Operational Manager |
| Consistent service standards regardless of site visited            | Standards checklist data                                         | Team Leaders;<br>Head of Service;<br>Operational Manager |
| Staff confident in their roles, supported through training         | Staff survey; training completion data; skills gap analysis      | Team Leaders;<br>Head of Service;<br>Operational Manager |
| Continuous improvement embedded in everyday practice               | Standards checklist data; action log/plan delivery data          | Team Leaders;<br>Head of Service;<br>Operational Manager |

### Evidence, Impact and Accountability

| Success looks like                                              | How we'll know                                                                                                      | Who leads                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| A balanced approach to performance – data, feedback and stories | Combined quant/qual reporting framework in place; Public Health MoU                                                 | Head of Service;<br>Operational Manager |
| Better understanding of non-transactional library use           | Non-transactional use methodology developed and reported; qualitative impact framework developed; Public Health MoU | Head of Service;<br>Operational Manager |
| Clear evidence of value and impact for Members and partners     | Quarterly performance report to Committee                                                                           | Head of Service;<br>Operational Manager |
| Transparent reporting and regular review of progress            | Quarterly performance report to Committee; annual monitoring report                                                 | Head of Service;<br>Operational Manager |

## Residents and Communities

| Success looks like                                                                                     | How we'll know                                                                         | Who leads                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| More residents using libraries (physical and digital), including new users                             | Active membership data; footfall; e-library usage                                      | Strategic Team, Head of Service                   |
| Libraries that feel welcoming, safe and relevant                                                       | Satisfaction survey; qualitative case studies; standards checklist                     | Strategic Team, Head of Service                   |
| Residents able to access reading, learning, digital support and information in ways that work for them | Satisfaction survey; service usage by activity type                                    | Strategic Team, Head of Service                   |
| Increased wellbeing and social connection                                                              | Case studies; partner qualitative data; survey wellbeing questions                     | Partner Services, Strategic Team, Head of Service |
| Libraries recognised as trusted places to ask for help                                                 | Qualitative feedback; satisfaction surveys; standards checklist                        | Strategic Team, Head of Service                   |
| Collections are more representative of our communities and responsive to demand                        | Satisfaction survey; no. public stock requests; targets within stock management system | Strategic Team; Head of Service                   |

## Children, Young People and Families

| Success looks like                                                | How we'll know                                                                    | Who leads                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| More children supported with early language and love of reading   | Early years programme attendance; reading programme data; qualitative impact data | Early Years Engagement Coordinator; Strategic Team |
| Families feel confident using libraries                           | Satisfaction survey (family respondents); qualitative feedback                    | Early Years Engagement Coordinator; Strategic Team |
| Stronger links with schools and early years settings              | No. of active school/early years partnerships                                     | Early Years Engagement Coordinator; Strategic Team |
| Young people using libraries to study, learn and build confidence | Student counts; youth activity attendance; Youth Engagement Network participation | Strategic Team; Head of Service                    |

## Learning, Skills and Digital Inclusion

| Success looks like                                                          | How we'll know                                                                   | Who leads                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| More residents supported to get online and use digital services confidently | Digital support session numbers; PC/Wi-Fi usage; Digital Skills Providers data   | Strategic Team; Head of Service |
| Libraries recognised as trusted places for assisted digital support         | Satisfaction survey; digital support session data; Digital Skills Providers data | Strategic Team; Head of Service |
| Increased use of study spaces and learning resources                        | Footfall; device and data usage data                                             | Strategic Team; Head of Service |
| Improved confidence in accessing trusted information                        | Satisfaction survey                                                              | Team Leaders; Head of Service   |

## Community Hubs and Partnerships

| Success looks like                                                    | How we'll know                                                                                  | Who leads                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Libraries embedded within a community hub model where this adds value | No. of co-located services; hub delivery data                                                   | Operational Manager; Head of Service                 |
| Clear referral and signposting pathways with partners                 | Referral data; partner agreements in place                                                      | Operational Manager; Head of Service                 |
| Stronger partnership delivery within library spaces                   | No. of partner-delivered sessions/activities                                                    | Strategic Team; Operational Manager; Head of Service |
| Scalable models for co-location, integration and outreach             | No. of outreach/co-located sites; no. of outreach sessions delivered; qualitative feedback data | Strategic Team; Operational Manager; Head of Service |

## Culture and Creativity

| Success looks like                                                  | How we'll know                                                                                                                                                                         | Who leads                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Libraries recognised as accessible cultural spaces                  | Event/exhibition attendance; satisfaction survey                                                                                                                                       | Strategic Team; Head of Service |
| Increased participation in cultural, creative and heritage activity | Programme/events/activities attendance data                                                                                                                                            | Strategic Team; Head of Service |
| Opportunities for informal creative engagement                      | Programme data; qualitative feedback                                                                                                                                                   | Strategic Team; Head of Service |
| Stronger links with artists, cultural organisations, schools        | No. of active cultural partnerships (e.g. Williamson Art Gallery, Floral Pavilion); no. of events                                                                                      | Strategic Team; Head of Service |
| External funding secured to extend the cultural offer               | No. of external grants and funding secured; value of external grants and funding; no. of participants attending funded events/activities; qualitative impact data on funded programmes | Strategic Team; Head of Service |

## Pride in Place

| Success looks like                                                 | How we'll know                               | Who leads                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Libraries contributing to local pride, identity and sense of place | Qualitative case studies; community feedback | Strategic Team; Head of Service                      |
| Buildings and spaces residents feel proud of                       | Satisfaction survey; condition surveys       | Strategic Team; Operational Manager; Head of Service |
| Libraries playing a role in place-based initiatives                | No. of active place-based projects           | Strategic Team; Head of Service                      |

## Outreach and Reaching New Audiences

| Success looks like                                                    | How we'll know                                                    | Who leads                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Increased engagement from residents who don't currently use libraries | New/lapsed membership recovery data; outreach attendance          | Strategic Team; Head of Service |
| Services delivered in a wider range of community settings             | No. of outreach/pop-up sessions                                   | Strategic Team; Head of Service |
| Stronger relationships with trusted community organisations           | No. of active community partnerships                              | Strategic Team; Head of Service |
| Clearer understanding of who libraries are not yet reaching           | Demographic/reach analysis against borough population data; ACORN | Strategic Team; Head of Service |

## Future

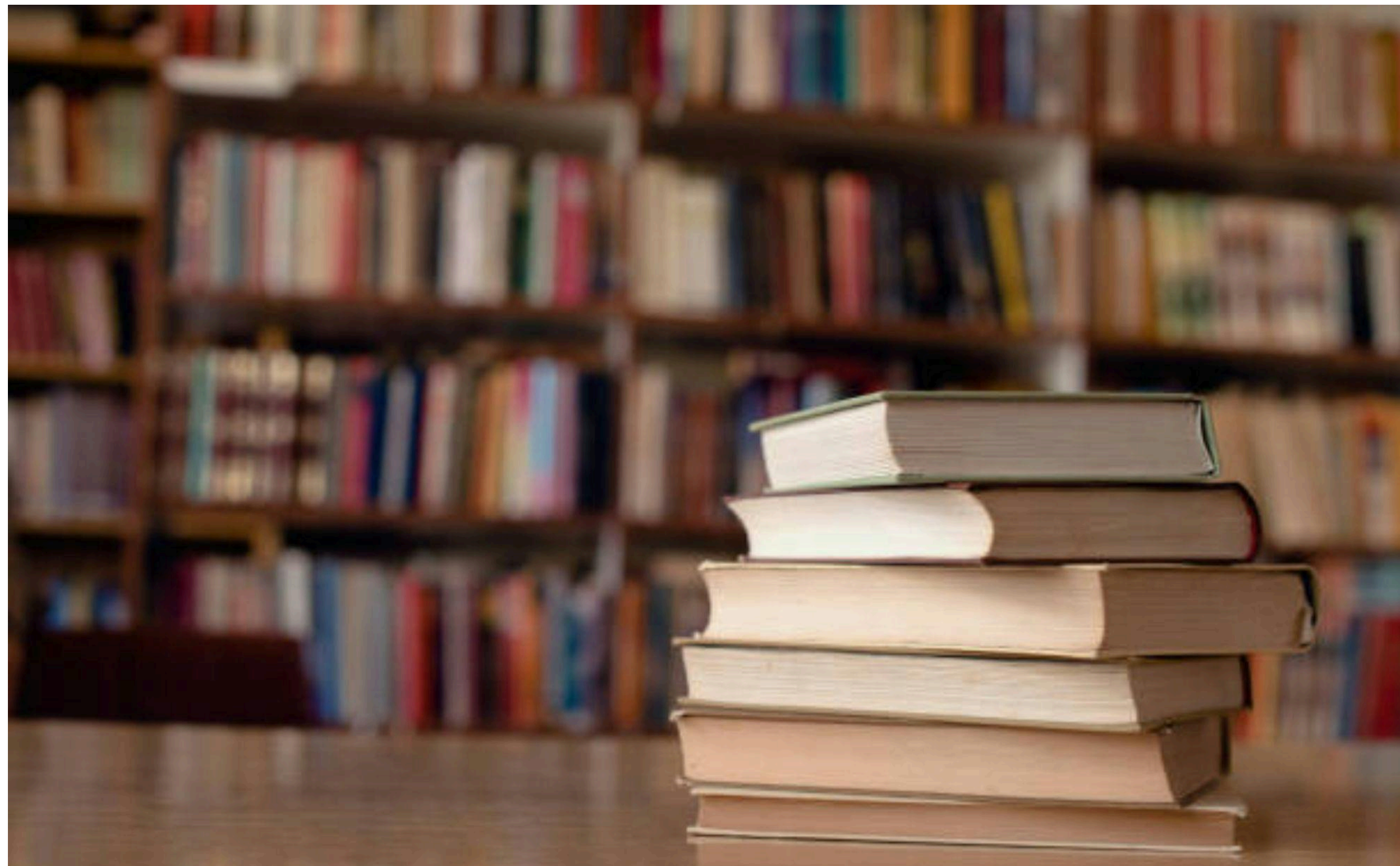
| Success looks like                                              | How we'll know                                                                                                                             | Who leads                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| A sustainable, resilient library service fit for changing needs | Budget/delivery plan review; StaffSavvy benefits realisation                                                                               | Head of Service; Operational Manager                 |
| A workforce equipped for modern library roles                   | Service restructure; training data                                                                                                         | Head of Service; Operational Manager                 |
| A clear pathway toward the Libraries Development Framework      | Registration/application milestones (2027)                                                                                                 | Strategic Team; Head of Service; Operational Manager |
| Libraries firmly established as the community front door        | Co-location/signposting data; satisfaction survey data; qualitative feedback; embedding libraries in Community Hub model (four localities) | Head of Service; Operational Manager                 |

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# Wirral Libraries Strategy Consultation Report

## 2 March - 13 April 2026

We asked residents, library users, staff and partners for their views on the draft 'Libraries for All' strategy. Feedback will help confirm whether the proposed direction reflects what matters most to local communities and where improvements may still be needed.



|                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cover                                                                                                                                    |
| Headlines                                                                                                                                |
| Key findings 1                                                                                                                           |
| Key findings 2                                                                                                                           |
| Your use of libraries                                                                                                                    |
| Access to Libraries and Community Spaces                                                                                                 |
| Q11 Barriers to library use                                                                                                              |
| Q14 What types of community activity, support or services would you like to see delivered from libraries?                                |
| Learning, Reading, Wellbeing and Culture                                                                                                 |
| Q19 What improvements, if any, would you like to see in learning, reading, cultural or wellbeing activities delivered through libraries? |
| Digital Access and Information                                                                                                           |
| Q25 Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the future of libraries and their role in your community?                        |
| Demographics - geography                                                                                                                 |
| Demographics                                                                                                                             |

# Key findings

**People broadly agree with the direction of the strategy, but the consultation evidence shows they expect basic access issues — especially opening hours — to be addressed as a priority, or confidence in delivery will remain limited.**

**Libraries are widely used and remain relevant to residents' everyday lives**

93% have used a physical Wirral library in the last 12 months (**Q2**).

**Most users engage with libraries regularly rather than occasionally**

73% use a library at least monthly (**Q3**).

**The strategic direction is broadly supported, but not without reservations**

68% agree or strongly agree that the strategy reflects the role libraries should play in the future (**Q5**).

**Being welcoming and inclusive is a core expectation, not an added benefit**

96% say it is important or very important that libraries are welcoming, inclusive and trusted spaces (**Q6**).

**There is strong support for libraries expanding their role as access points for services**

85% support libraries acting as a “community front door” for council, partner and community services (**Q7**).

# Key findings cont

## **Access is acceptable to a majority, but dissatisfaction is also evident**

59% are satisfied with access to libraries, while 24% are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (**Q8**).

## **Opening hours are the single biggest practical barrier to greater use**

52% say opening hours are a barrier that stop them using libraries more (**Q9**).

## **Most respondents are open to operational change if it improves access**

70% support exploring more flexible opening hours and increased use of technology (**Q10**).

## **Libraries are seen as important social infrastructure for community connection**

97% say libraries are important for helping people connect with their community (**Q12**).

## **Community-led and partner activity in libraries is widely supported**

93% support libraries hosting more community-led and partner-delivered activities (**Q13**).

## **Book lending remains the central reason people value libraries**

93% say reading and borrowing books is important to them (**Q15**).

## **Collections are generally seen as representative, but confidence is not universal**

62% feel library resources reflect them or their community (**Q16**).

# key findings cont

## **Libraries are viewed as important contributors to wellbeing and reducing isolation**

96% say libraries are important for supporting wellbeing and reducing loneliness and social isolation (**Q18**).

## **Digital access through libraries is considered essential**

95% say access to free computers and Wi-Fi is important (**Q20**).

## **Face-to-face digital support is expected, not optional**

96% say in-person digital support is important (**Q21**).

## **There is strong backing for libraries helping people navigate public services online**

88% agree libraries should help people access council, NHS and partner services online (**Q22**).

## **Reading and literacy are clear long-term priorities for residents**

73% identify reading and literacy as a priority for the next five years (**Q23**).

## **Confidence that the strategy will deliver improvement is mixed and fragile**

48% are confident or very confident that the strategy will improve libraries (**Q24**).

# Wirral Have Your Say

## Your Use of Libraries

4 Which library do you use the most?

All

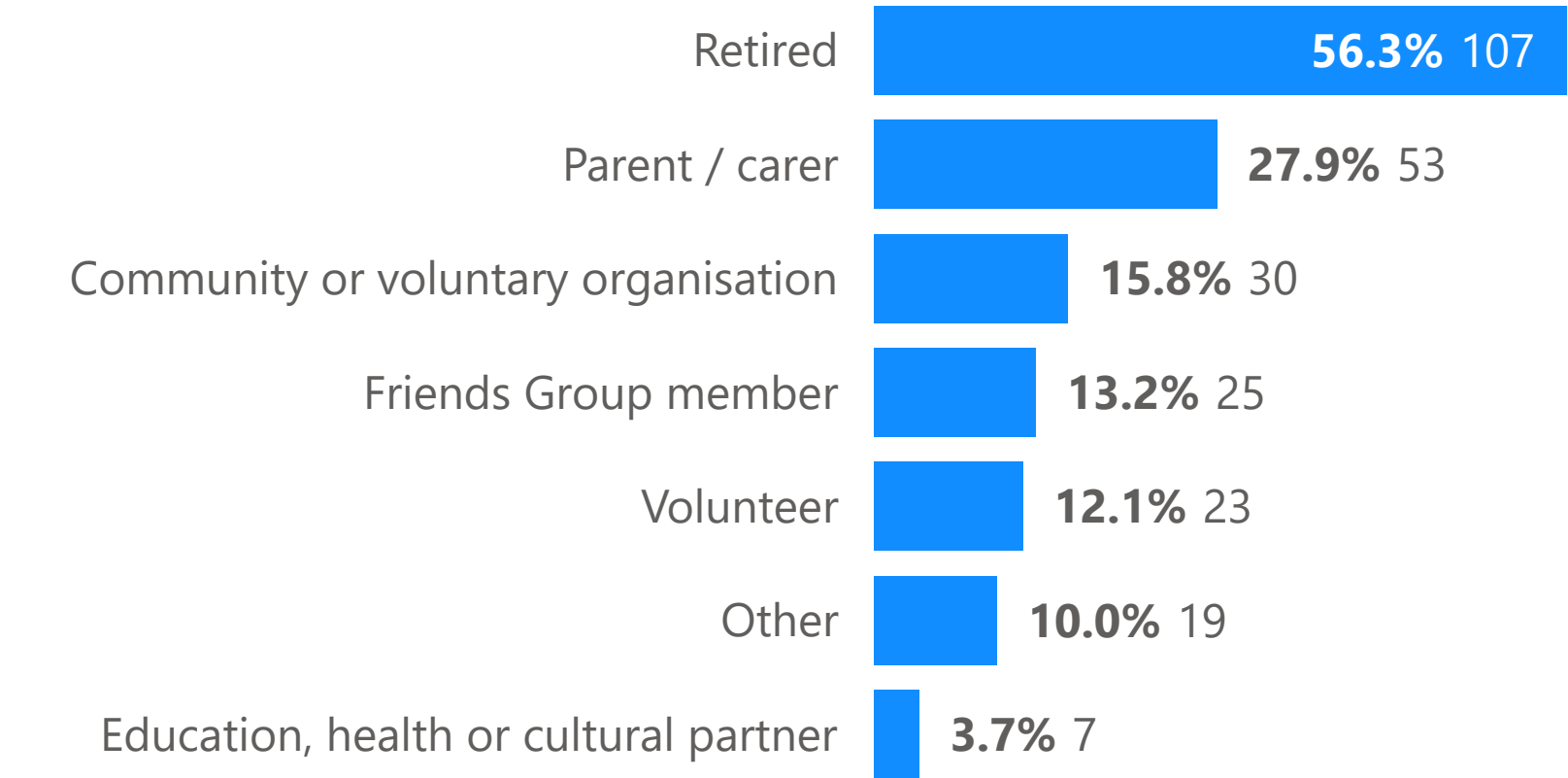
Ward

All



### 1 Please tell us if any of the below groups describe you:

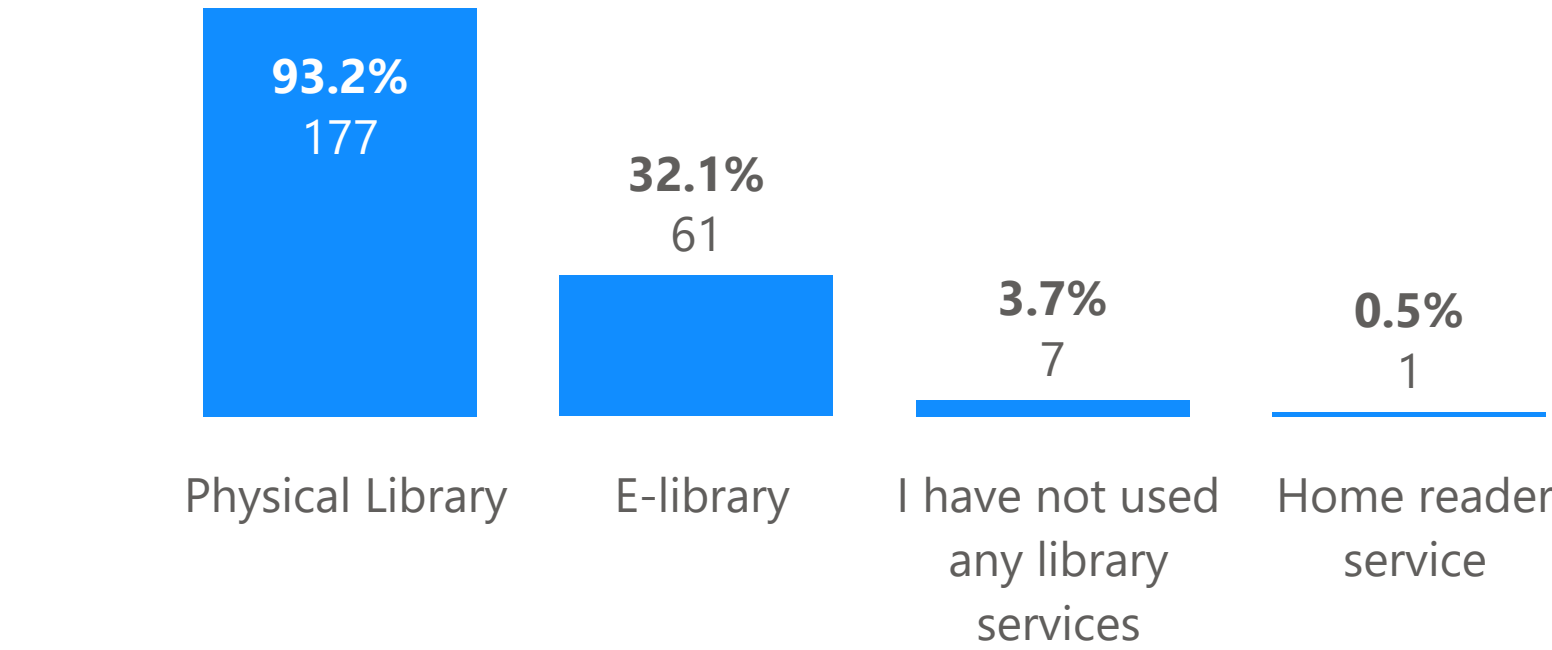
Respondents could select multiple options; percentages may exceed 100%



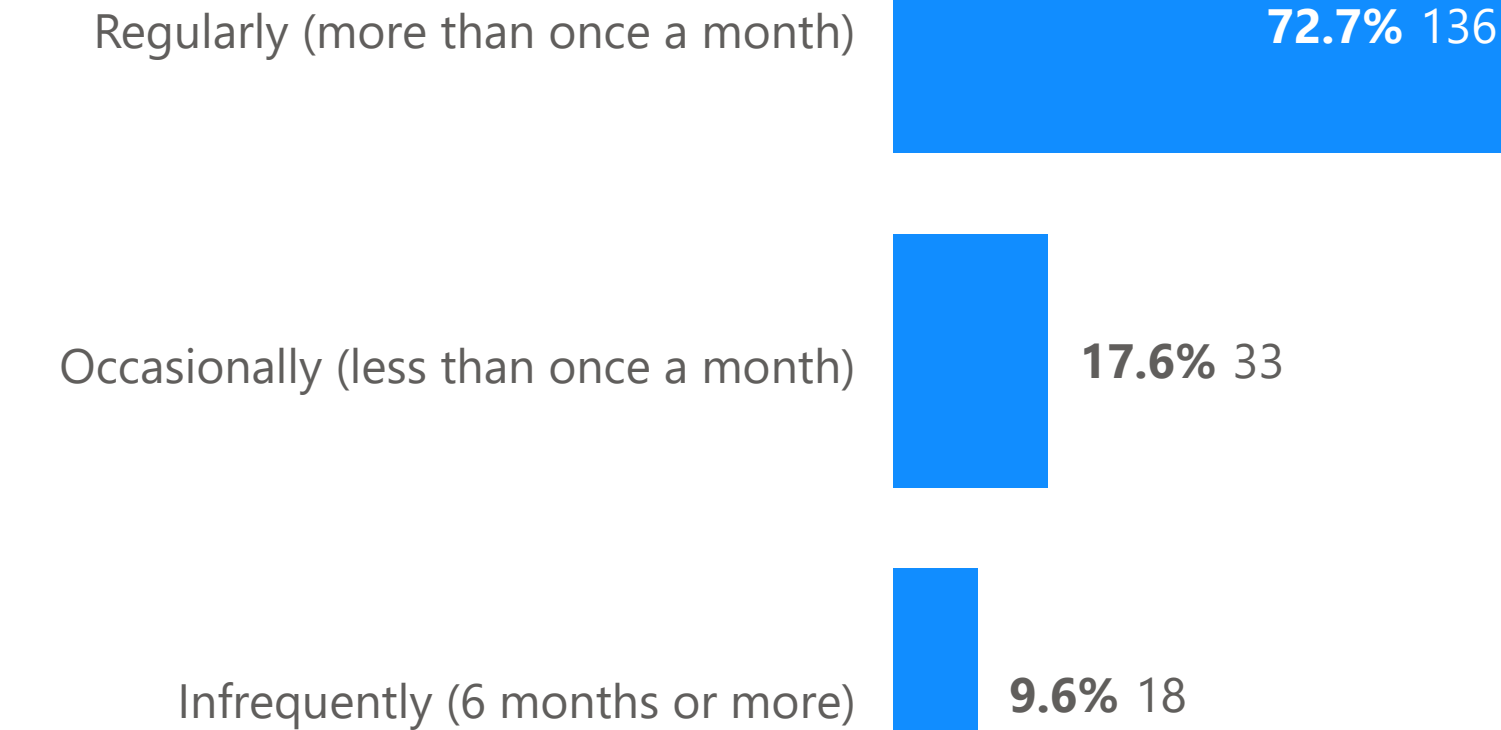
|                                                   |                 |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Other                                             | Total Responses |
| Employed                                          | 2               |
| Resident                                          | 2               |
| Adult student                                     | 1               |
| Council employee                                  | 1               |
| Done                                              | 1               |
| Ex volunteer                                      | 1               |
| Full-time academic researcher                     | 1               |
| Member of the general public and local community. | 1               |
| None of these.                                    | 1               |
| Resident of local area                            | 1               |
| Self employed                                     | 1               |
| Self employed, part time student, library user    | 1               |
| Semi retired.                                     | 1               |
| Unemployed                                        | 1               |
| Wirral resident employed in the Wirral.           | 1               |
| worker                                            | 1               |
| ...                                               | 1               |

### 2 In the last 12 months, have you used any of the following library services?

Respondents could select multiple options; percentages may exceed 100%

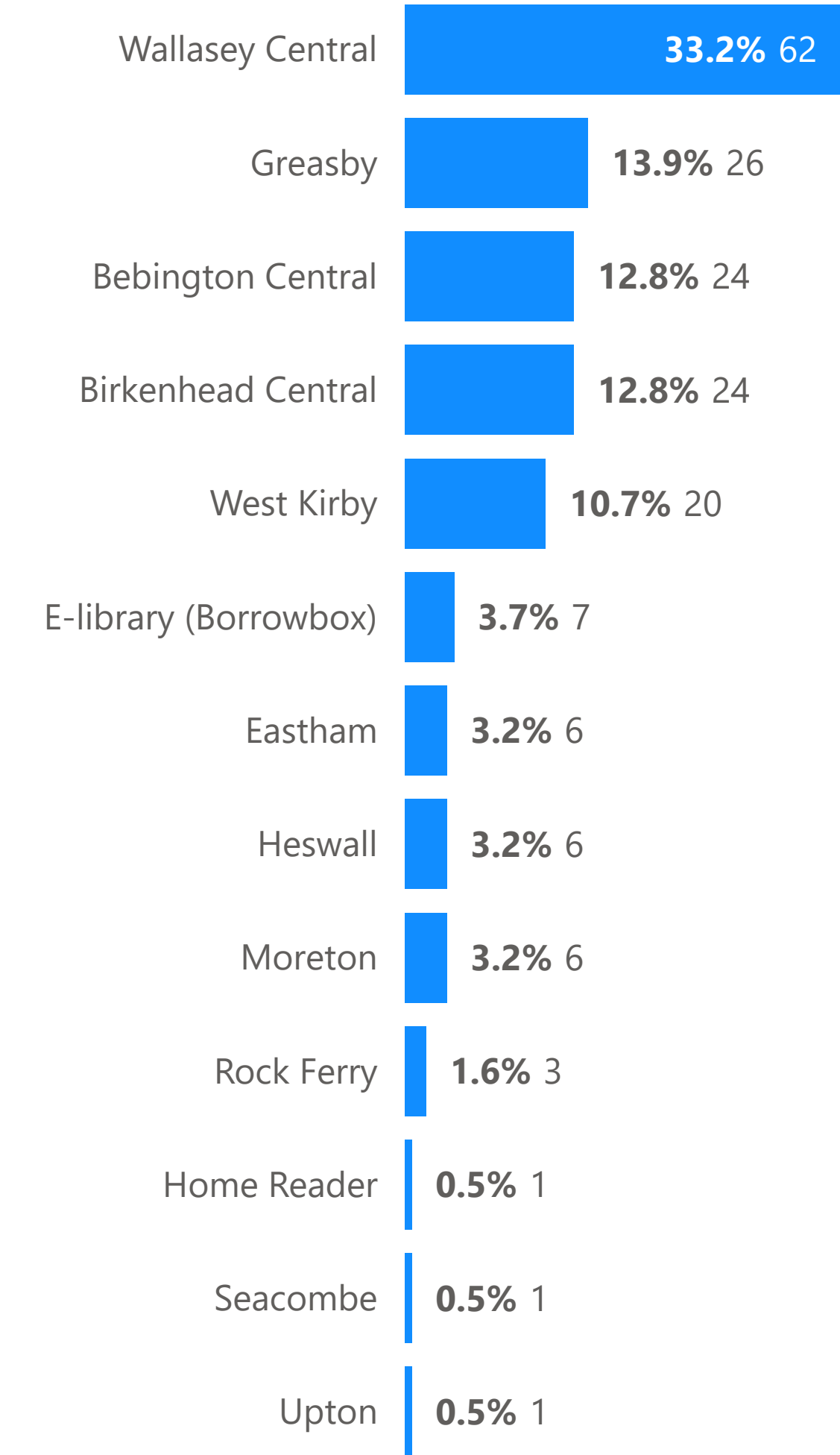


### 3 How often do you currently use Wirral libraries or e-library services?



| Source     | Total Responses | %      |
|------------|-----------------|--------|
| EHQ        | 134             | 70.5%  |
| Paper Copy | 56              | 29.5%  |
| Total      | 190             | 100.0% |

### 4 Which library do you use the most?



4 Which library do you use the most?

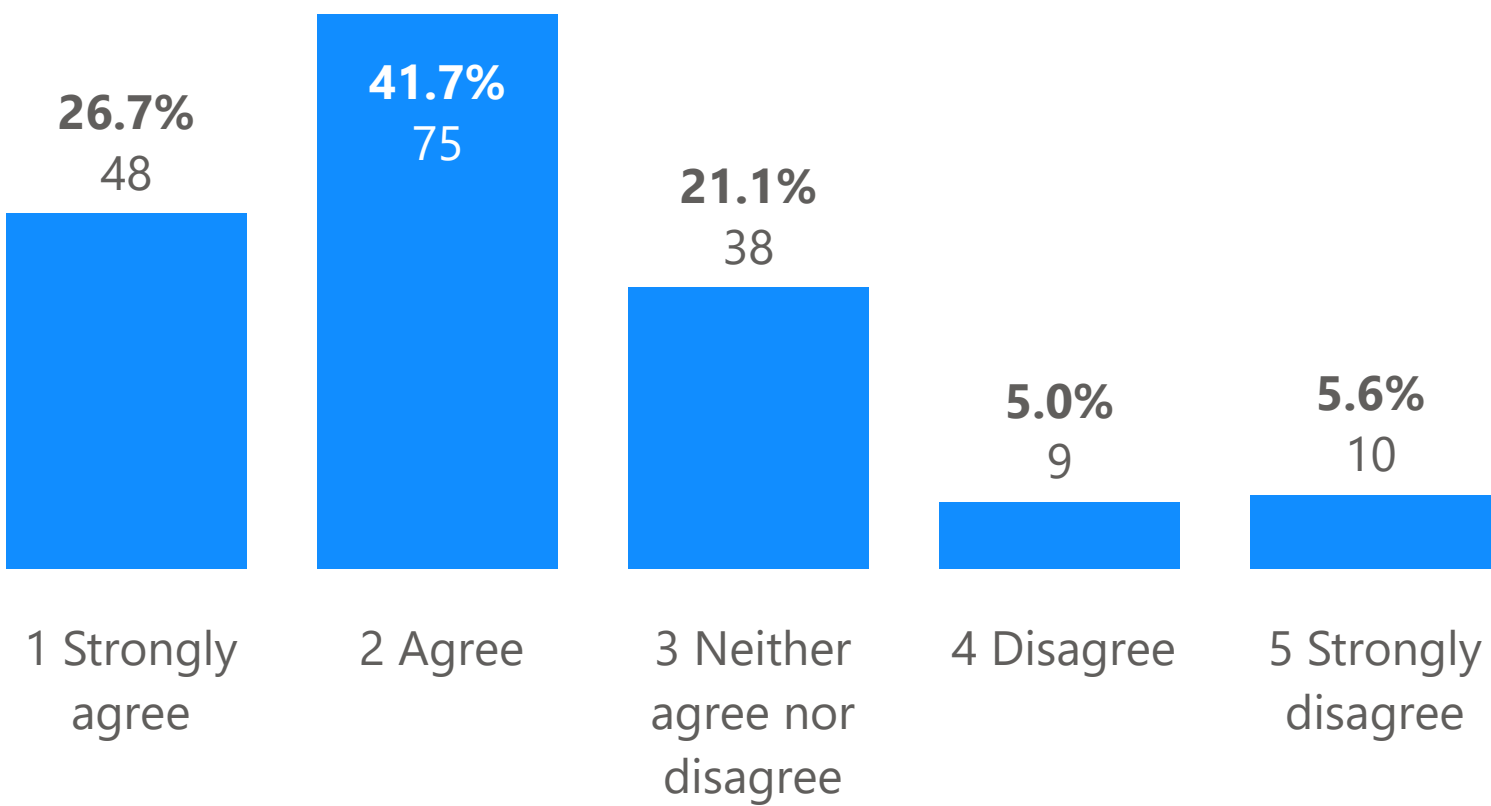
All

Ward

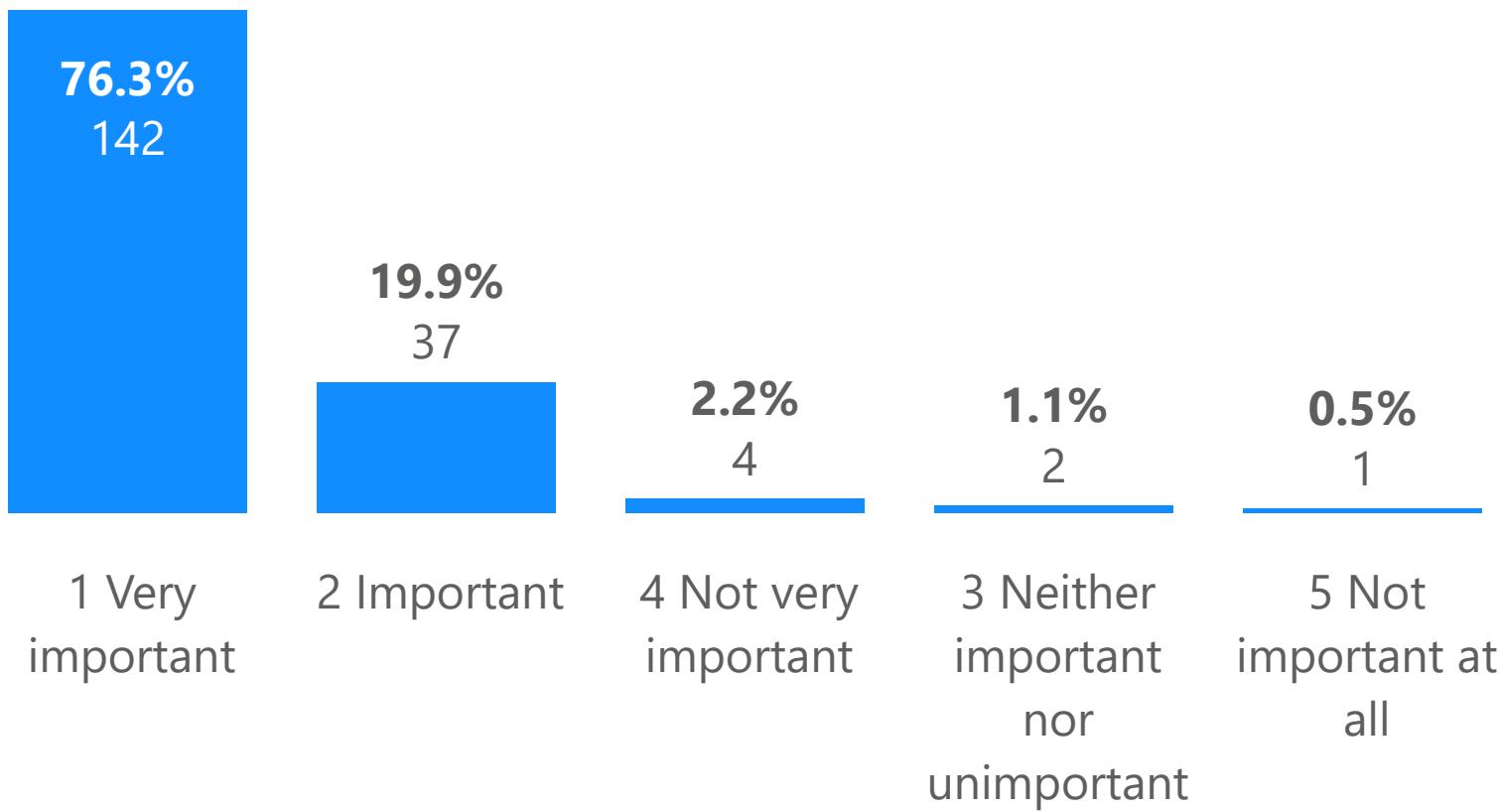
All



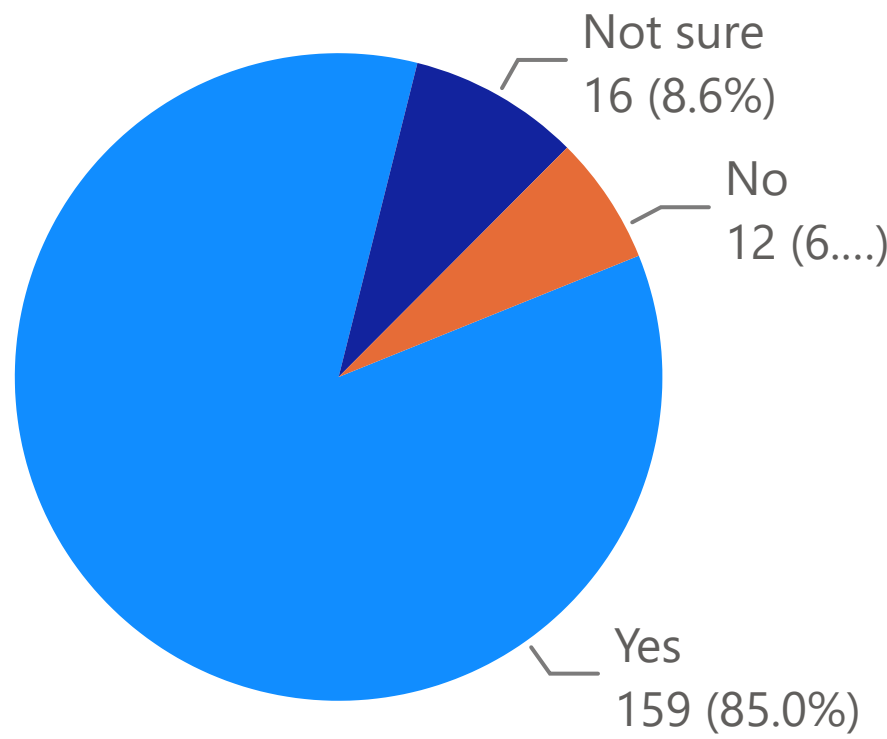
5 How strongly do you agree that this strategy reflects the role libraries should play in Wirral?



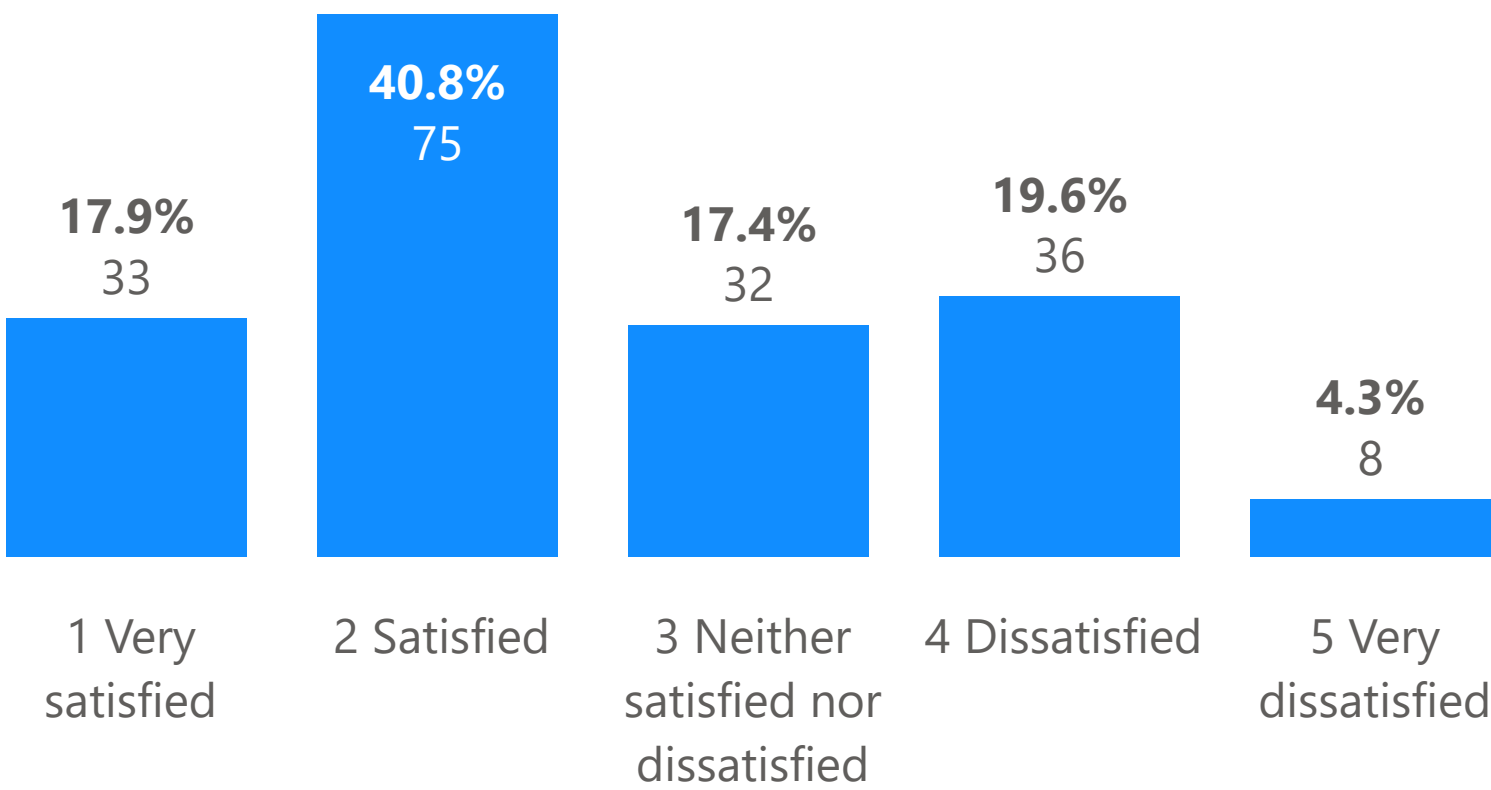
6 The strategy describes libraries as welcoming, inclusive and trusted community spaces. How important is this to you?



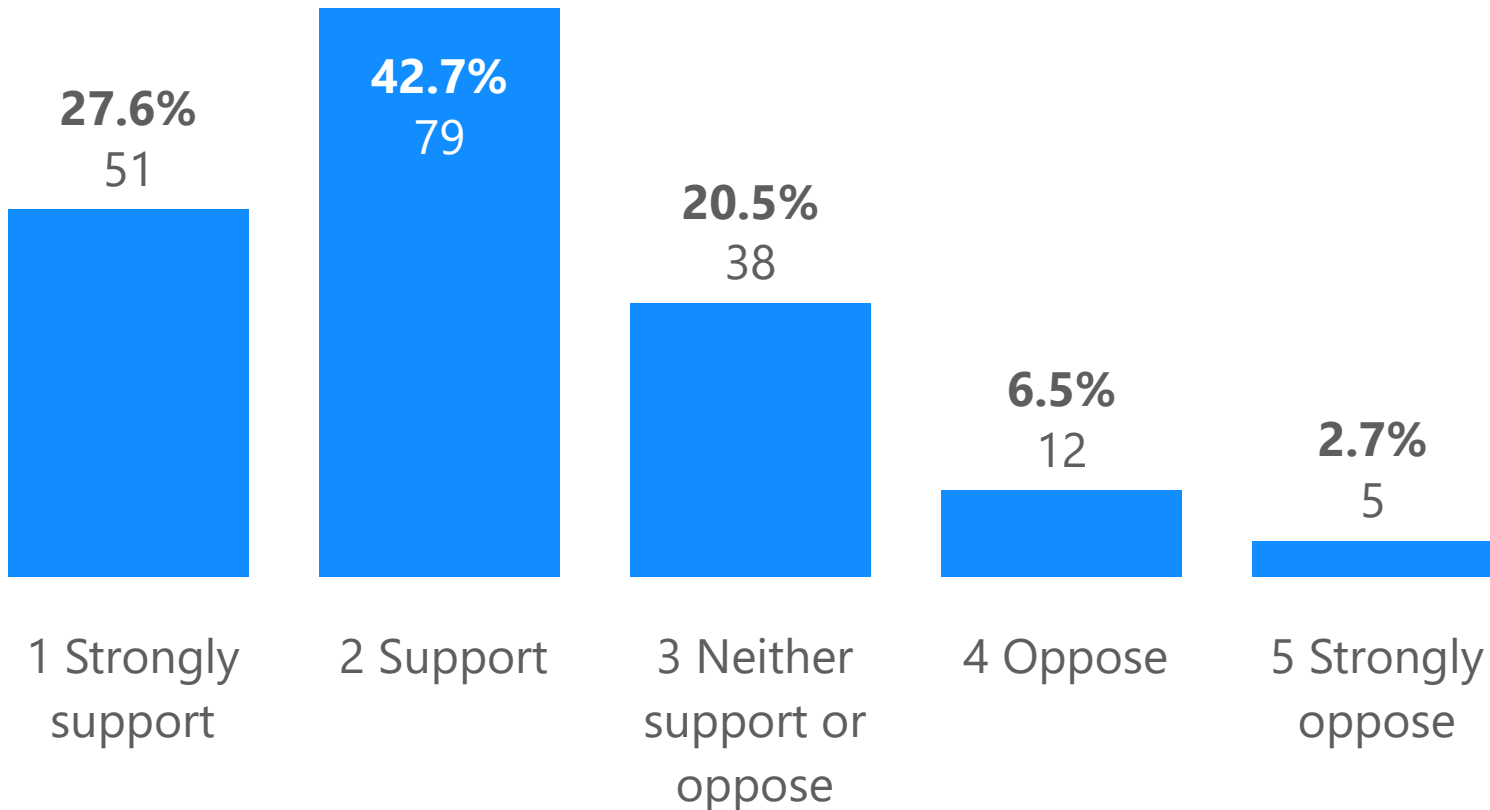
7 Do you think libraries should act as a “community front door”, bringing together Council, partner and community services in one...



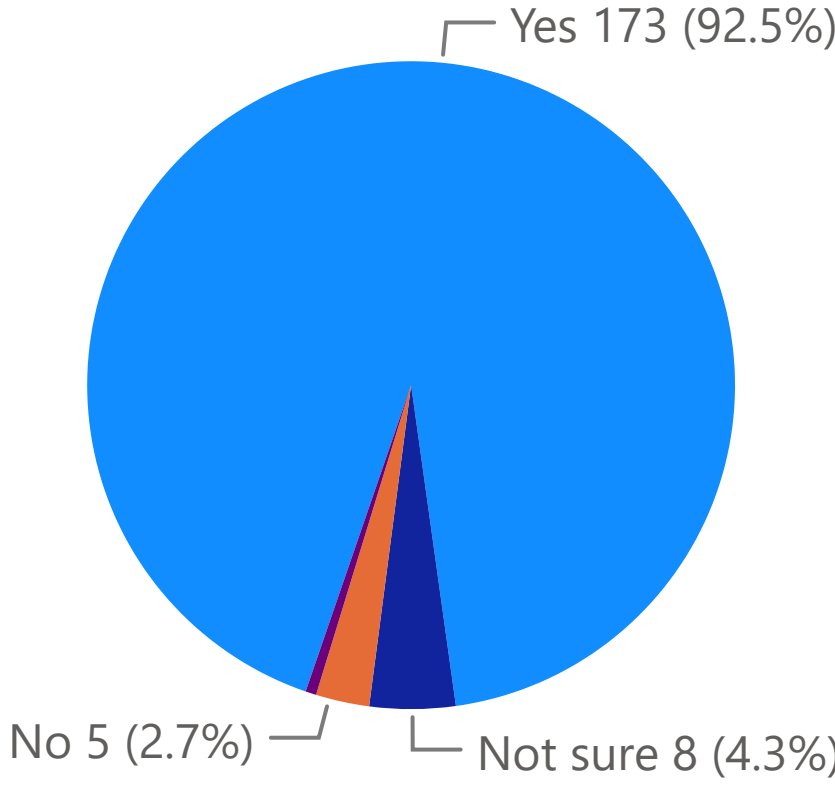
8 How satisfied are you with current access to libraries (including opening hours, locations and layouts)?



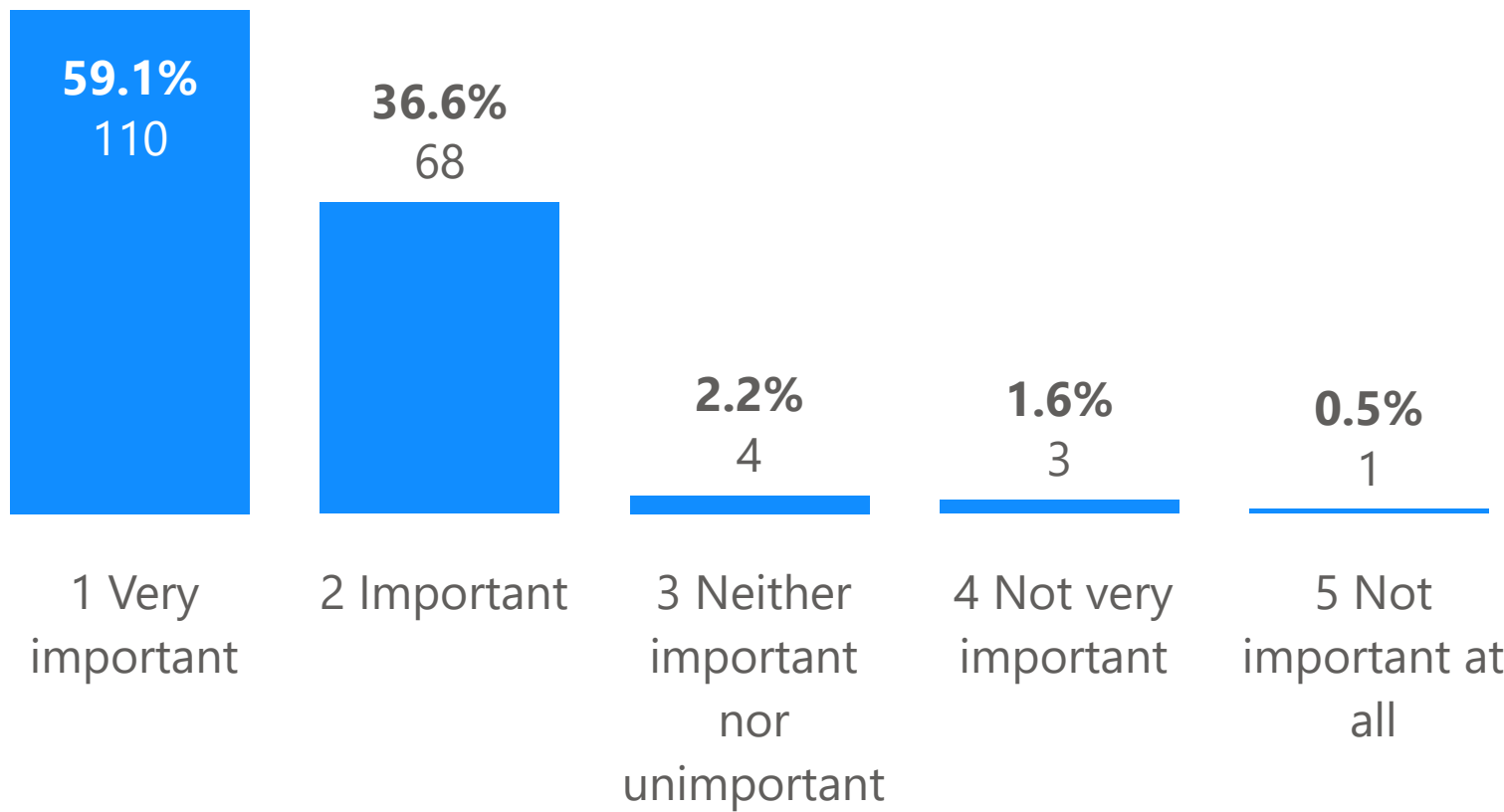
10 How strongly do you support exploring more flexible opening hours and the use of technology to improve access?



13 Do you support libraries hosting more social, community-led and partner-delivered events and activities?

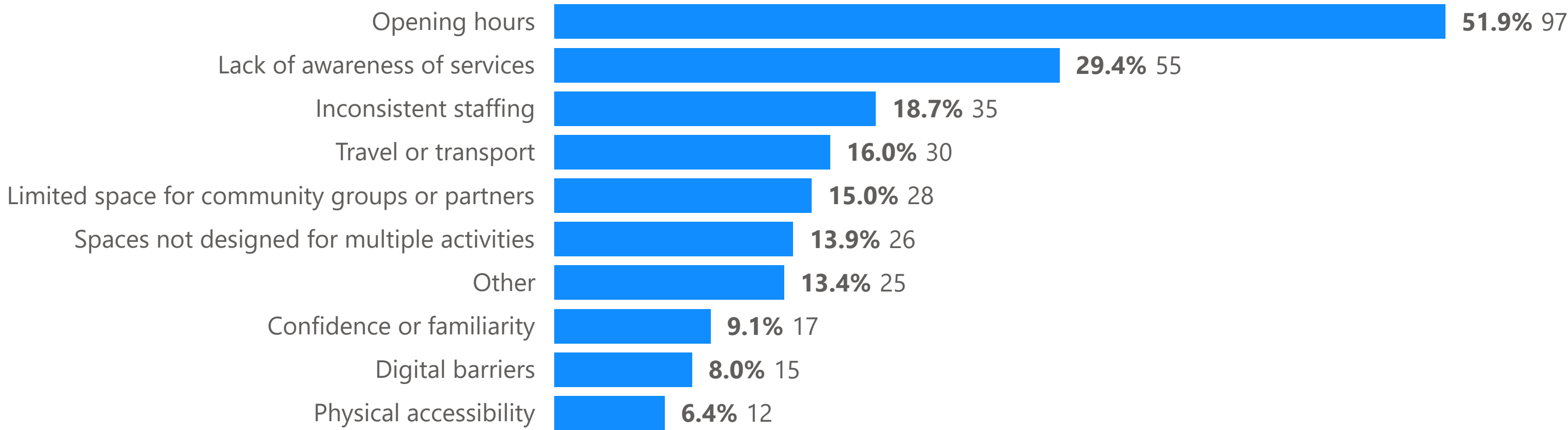


12 How important is the role of libraries in helping people connect with their community?



9 Which factors make it harder for you or others to use libraries?

Respondents could select multiple options; percentages may exceed 100%



9a Other barriers

After its closure there is no library in Bromborough and many misses it.

Being closed at lunchtime and one day in the week is inconvenient, but not a barrier to usage

Choose to use nearest library

Closing of Bromborough Library leaving a gap in library support. A key community pillar removed.

Closing of library iver lunchtime rather than staff having staggered lunches to allow the library to be open. So much space and it is under utilised. Limited things on especially for working people to access as everything targeted to working hours not after school etc.

Closure of existing Libraries local to residents.

Distance from home

I am a retired art-gallery curator who still researches & writes publications for British art galleries & publishers. Over past 5-6 years Wirral Library services have withdrawn the digital resources that I used to use remotely from home in New Brighton e.g. the Grove Dictionary of Art/Oxford Art Online; + the online Oxford Dictionary of National Biography; access to Timesnewspapers online via BorrowBox. The withdrawal of these has meant I have had to subscribe financially to a private library (Society of Antiquaries of London) to get online access which has just been withdrawn in April 2026 & to pay subscription to The Times + the closure of Wallasey Central Library for 1hr at lunchtime prevents me from working the day through + I understand the regulations you can only have free wi-fi for 1 hour.

Wirral Have Your Say

Barriers to Library Use

4 Which library do you use the most?

All

Ward

All



Number of respondents

105

Q11 What would make libraries, as community or shared spaces, easier for you and your community to use?

% is calculated as % of those who answered the question. % may add up to more than 100% as responses can cover multiple categories

| Category                                               | Total Mentions | %     | Summary                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wider opening hours                                    | 41             | 39.0% | Opening hours, including lunchtime, evening or weekend access, affect who is able to use library services.                                      |
| Promotion & advertising                                | 20             | 19.0% | Better promotion is needed so people are aware of available activities, services and opportunities within libraries.                            |
| Physical Accessibility - Transport/parking/lifts/ramps | 15             | 14.3% | Accessibility related to transport, parking and building layout affects people’s ability to attend and take part.                               |
| Engaged staff                                          | 12             | 11.4% | People value consistent, friendly and knowledgeable staff who build trust with users and understand local community needs.                      |
| Encourage Third party providers                        | 11             | 10.5% | Opening library spaces to third-party and community-led groups is seen as a way to expand provision.                                            |
| Availability of facilities                             | 10             | 9.5%  | Comments highlight the need for library spaces and facilities to be fully usable and appropriately equipped.                                    |
| Cafe/refreshments                                      | 10             | 9.5%  | Access to refreshments such as cafés or coffee facilities is seen as making libraries more welcoming and encouraging longer visits.             |
| Variety of activities                                  | 6              | 5.7%  | There is demand for a broader range of activities that appeal to different age groups and interests, beyond traditional library services.       |
| Co-location of services                                | 4              | 3.8%  | Co-locating libraries with other public or community services is seen as a way to improve accessibility and convenience.                        |
| Reopen libraries                                       | 4              | 3.8%  | Reopening closed libraries is seen as important for restoring local access to activities and services.                                          |
| Adult education courses                                | 3              | 2.9%  | Libraries are viewed as important venues for adult learning, digital skills and confidence-building courses.                                    |
| Coputers and WiFi                                      | 3              | 2.9%  | Access to computers, WiFi and digital resources remains important for those without reliable access at home.                                    |
| Engage with schools                                    | 3              | 2.9%  | Closer links with schools are seen as a way to encourage learning and reading from an early age.                                                |
| Out of date book stock                                 | 3              | 2.9%  | Book collections are dated, with insufficient turnover of titles to reflect current interests, issues and culture.                              |
| Pet friendly                                           | 3              | 2.9%  | A small number of respondents would welcome libraries being pet friendly to support inclusive community use.                                    |
| Preserve quiet areas                                   | 3              | 2.9%  | Importance of protecting quiet study and reading areas alongside any expanded community use.                                                    |
| Toilets                                                | 3              | 2.9%  | Availability and quality of toilet facilities are identified as basic but essential to making libraries usable for all.                         |
| Increase funding                                       | 2              | 1.9%  | There is concern that reduced funding limits staff capacity, opening hours and the overall quality of library services.                         |
| Under-utilised facilities                              | 2              | 1.9%  | Library spaces and facilities are available but not fully used or promoted to support a wider range of services and resources.                  |
| Accessibility - parking                                | 1              | 1.0%  | Ease of parking, including free or closer parking, is frequently identified as a key factor affecting library access.                           |
| Accessible booking system                              | 1              | 1.0%  | Users want simpler and clearer systems to book rooms, events and facilities, reducing barriers to community use.                                |
| Charges and fines                                      | 1              | 1.0%  | Charges and fines are identified as potential barriers that can discourage people from using libraries.                                         |
| Digital Support                                        | 1              | 1.0%  |                                                                                                                                                 |
| Less bureaucracy                                       | 1              | 1.0%  | Reducing paperwork, forms and administrative hurdles would make it easier for communities and groups to use library spaces.                     |
| Limited stock availability (books)                     | 1              | 1.0%  | There are concerns that libraries do not hold enough copies or range of books, leading to long waits and difficulty accessing needed materials. |
| Reference provision                                    | 1              | 1.0%  | Some users value strong reference services and specialist resources to support research and information needs.                                  |

4 Which library do you use the most?

All

Ward

All



Number of respondents

118

Q14 What types of community activity, support or services would you like to see delivered from libraries?

% is calculated as % of those who answered the question. % may add up to more than 100% as responses can cover multiple categories

| Category                                               | Total Mentions | %     | Summary                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Classes and courses                                    | 27             | 22.9% | Courses and learning opportunities delivered through libraries are seen as a positive way to support education and wellbeing.             |
| Support/wellness groups                                | 27             | 22.9% | Wellbeing and support activities are viewed as a way to reduce isolation and provide community support.                                   |
| Hobby groups                                           | 26             | 22.0% | People would like libraries to host hobby-based groups such as crafts, games and creative activities.                                     |
| Talks and demonstrations                               | 23             | 19.5% | Interest in talks, lectures and demonstrations that inform, inspire and encourage discussion.                                             |
| Child specific events                                  | 22             | 18.6% | Activities designed specifically for children are viewed as important for engagement and development.                                     |
| Co-location of services                                | 17             | 14.4% | Co-locating libraries with other public or community services is seen as a way to improve accessibility and convenience.                  |
| Author/literary events                                 | 16             | 13.6% | Author talks and literary events are seen as an engaging way to promote reading and cultural interest.                                    |
| Social oppotunities                                    | 12             | 10.2% | Libraries are seen as places to create informal social opportunities that help people meet others and feel connected.                     |
| Book Clubs                                             | 8              | 6.8%  | Book clubs for different ages, abilities and interests are valued as a way to encourage reading and social connection.                    |
| Cafe/refreshments                                      | 8              | 6.8%  | Access to refreshments such as cafés or coffee facilities is seen as making libraries more welcoming and encouraging longer visits.       |
| Encourage Third party providers                        | 8              | 6.8%  | Opening library spaces to third-party and community-led groups is seen as a way to expand provision.                                      |
| Promotion & advertising                                | 8              | 6.8%  | Better promotion is needed so people are aware of available activities, services and opportunities within libraries.                      |
| Teen Specific Activities                               | 8              | 6.8%  | Respondents want more targeted activities for teenagers and young people, including social, creative and digital options.                 |
| Physical Accessibility - Transport/parking/lifts/ramps | 6              | 5.1%  | Accessibility related to transport, parking and building layout affects people’s ability to attend and take part.                         |
| Preserve quiet areas                                   | 5              | 4.2%  | Importance of protecting quiet study and reading areas alongside any expanded community use.                                              |
| Family History                                         | 4              | 3.4%  | Family and local history research support is seen as a popular and valued library service.                                                |
| Wider opening hours                                    | 4              | 3.4%  | Opening hours, including lunchtime, evening or weekend access, affect who is able to use library services.                                |
| Engaged staff                                          | 3              | 2.5%  | People value consistent, friendly and knowledgeable staff who build trust with users and understand local community needs.                |
| Hot-desks/workspaces                                   | 2              | 1.7%  | Providing workspace or hot-desking options is seen as a way to support students and people working from home.                             |
| Toilets                                                | 2              | 1.7%  | Availability and quality of toilet facilities are identified as basic but essential to making libraries usable for all.                   |
| Accessible booking system                              | 1              | 0.8%  | Users want simpler and clearer systems to book rooms, events and facilities, reducing barriers to community use.                          |
| Engage with schools                                    | 1              | 0.8%  | Closer links with schools are seen as a way to encourage learning and reading from an early age.                                          |
| Less bureaucracy                                       | 1              | 0.8%  | Reducing paperwork, forms and administrative hurdles would make it easier for communities and groups to use library spaces.               |
| Male Social opportunities                              | 1              | 0.8%  | There is interest in activities specifically designed to engage men, particularly retired or isolated men.                                |
| Under-utilised facilities                              | 1              | 0.8%  | Library spaces and facilities are available but not fully used or promoted to support a wider range of services and resources.            |
| Variety of activities                                  | 1              | 0.8%  | There is demand for a broader range of activities that appeal to different age groups and interests, beyond traditional library services. |

4 Which library do you use the most?

All

Ward

All



15 Which of these library services are important to you?

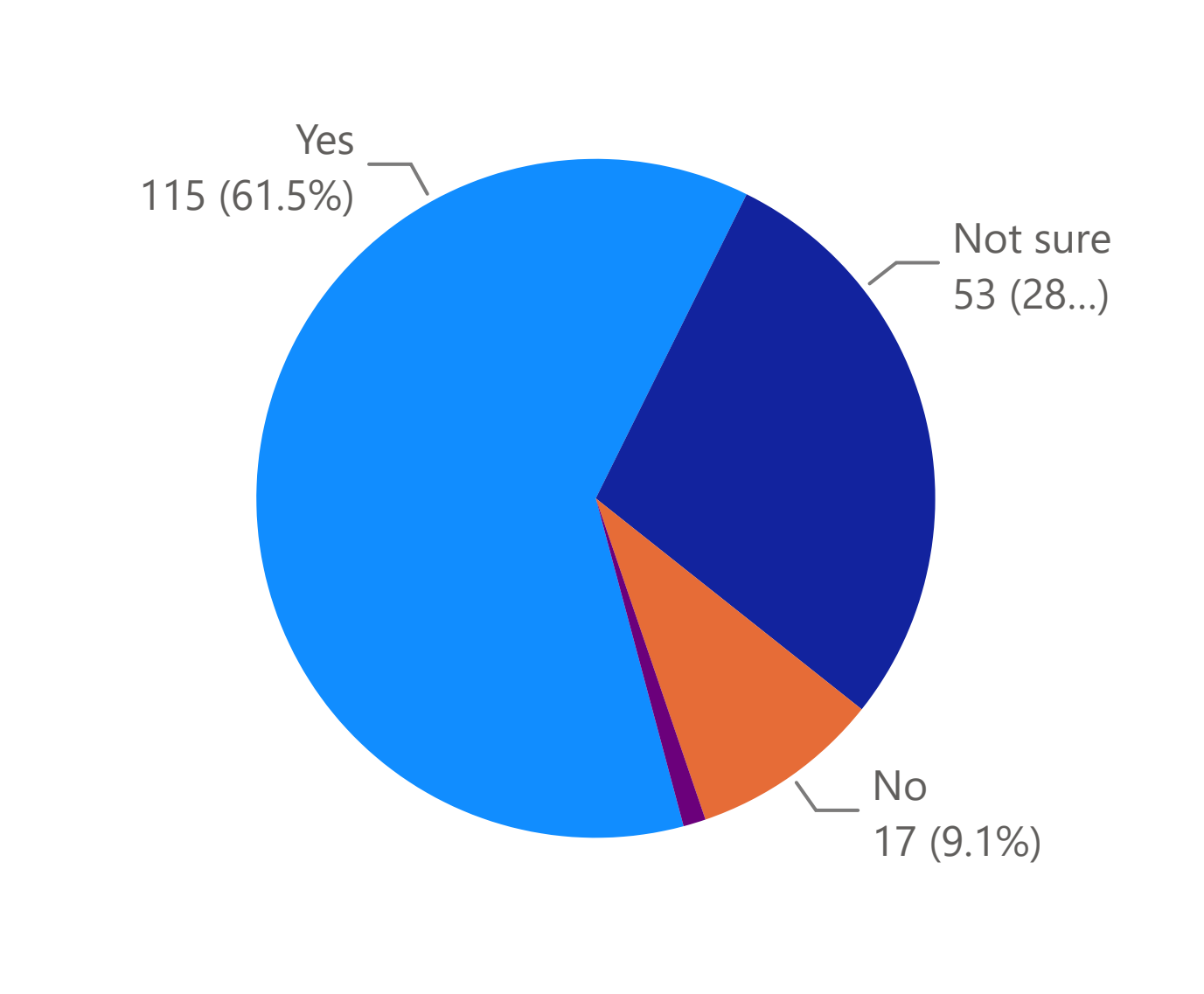
Respondents could select multiple options; percentages may exceed 100%



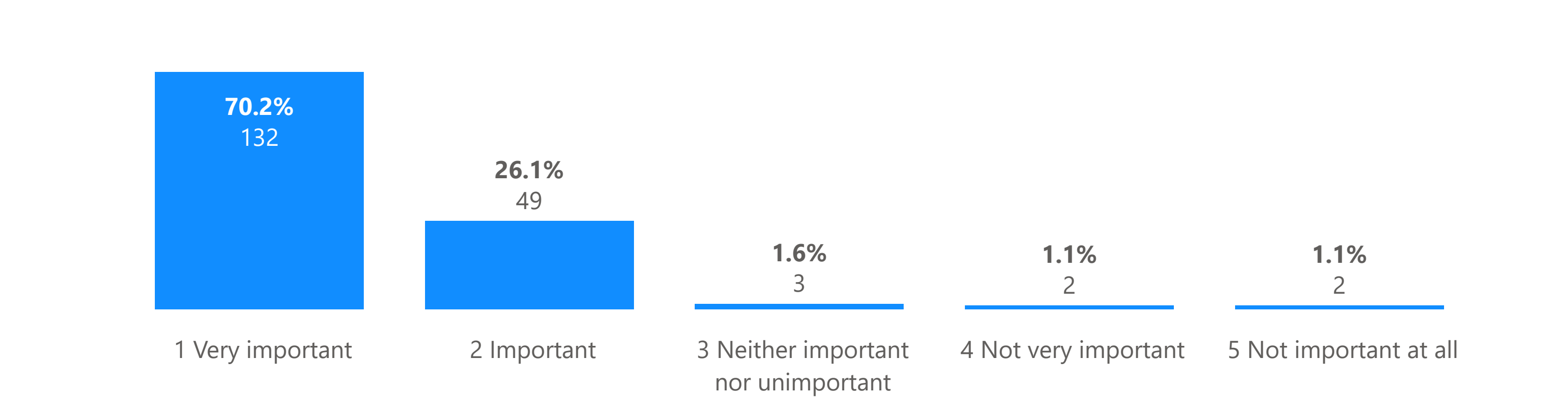
15a Other

- A mixture of all of the above
- A place to hold community meetings.
- A place to host Repair Cafes.
- Encouragement of learning by providing courses.
- Groups.
- Libraries are tremendous source of activity.
- Notice boards very useful. Access to newspapers.
- Repair Café, MakeFest
- Safe welcoming space open to all with friendly, knowledgeable staff and good choice of books and resources; premises free at point of use, especially useful to those on low income or suffering social isolation.
- site for Wirral Repair Cafe

16 Do you feel library resources (books, information, activities) are representative of you and/or your community?



18 How important is the role of libraries in supporting wellbeing and reducing social isolation?



Q17 If library resources are not representative, why?

% is calculated as % of those who answered the question. % may add up to more than 100% as responses can cover multiple categories

| Category                           | Total Mentions | %     |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-------|
| Limited stock availability (books) | 7              | 36.8% |
| Wider opening hours                | 5              | 26.3% |
| Out of date book stock             | 4              | 21.1% |
| Area dependent                     | 1              | 5.3%  |
| Christianity-centric events        | 1              | 5.3%  |
| Encourage Third party providers    | 1              | 5.3%  |
| Limited non-english language books | 1              | 5.3%  |
| Promotion & advertising            | 1              | 5.3%  |
| Under-utilised facilities          | 1              | 5.3%  |

Number of respondents

84

Q19 What improvements, if any, would you like to see in learning, reading, cultural or wellbeing activities delivered through libraries?

% is calculated as % of those who answered the question. % may add up to more than 100% as responses can cover multiple categories

| Category                                               | Total Mentions | %     | Summary                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Support/wellness groups                                | 14             | 16.7% | Wellbeing and support activities are viewed as a way to reduce isolation and provide community support.                                         |
| Promotion & advertising                                | 13             | 15.5% | Better promotion is needed so people are aware of available activities, services and opportunities within libraries.                            |
| Cafe/refreshments                                      | 11             | 13.1% | Access to refreshments such as cafés or coffee facilities is seen as making libraries more welcoming and encouraging longer visits.             |
| Classes and courses                                    | 11             | 13.1% | Courses and learning opportunities delivered through libraries are seen as a positive way to support education and wellbeing.                   |
| Limited stock availability (books)                     | 8              | 9.5%  | There are concerns that libraries do not hold enough copies or range of books, leading to long waits and difficulty accessing needed materials. |
| Engage with schools                                    | 7              | 8.3%  | Closer links with schools are seen as a way to encourage learning and reading from an early age.                                                |
| Engaged staff                                          | 6              | 7.1%  | People value consistent, friendly and knowledgeable staff who build trust with users and understand local community needs.                      |
| Social oppotunities                                    | 6              | 7.1%  | Libraries are seen as places to create informal social opportunities that help people meet others and feel connected.                           |
| Talks and demonstrations                               | 6              | 7.1%  | Interest in talks, lectures and demonstrations that inform, inspire and encourage discussion.                                                   |
| Variety of activities                                  | 6              | 7.1%  | There is demand for a broader range of activities that appeal to different age groups and interests, beyond traditional library services.       |
| Child specific events                                  | 5              | 6.0%  | Activities designed specifically for children are viewed as important for engagement and development.                                           |
| Out of date book stock                                 | 5              | 6.0%  | Book collections are dated, with insufficient turnover of titles to reflect current interests, issues and culture.                              |
| Physical Accessibility - Transport/parking/lifts/ramps | 5              | 6.0%  | Accessibility related to transport, parking and building layout affects people’s ability to attend and take part.                               |
| Author/literary events                                 | 4              | 4.8%  | Author talks and literary events are seen as an engaging way to promote reading and cultural interest.                                          |
| Book Clubs                                             | 4              | 4.8%  | Book clubs for different ages, abilities and interests are valued as a way to encourage reading and social connection.                          |
| Co-location of services                                | 4              | 4.8%  | Co-locating libraries with other public or community services is seen as a way to improve accessibility and convenience.                        |
| Hobby groups                                           | 4              | 4.8%  | People would like libraries to host hobby-based groups such as crafts, games and creative activities.                                           |
| Wider opening hours                                    | 4              | 4.8%  | Opening hours, including lunchtime, evening or weekend access, affect who is able to use library services.                                      |

4 Which library do you use the most?

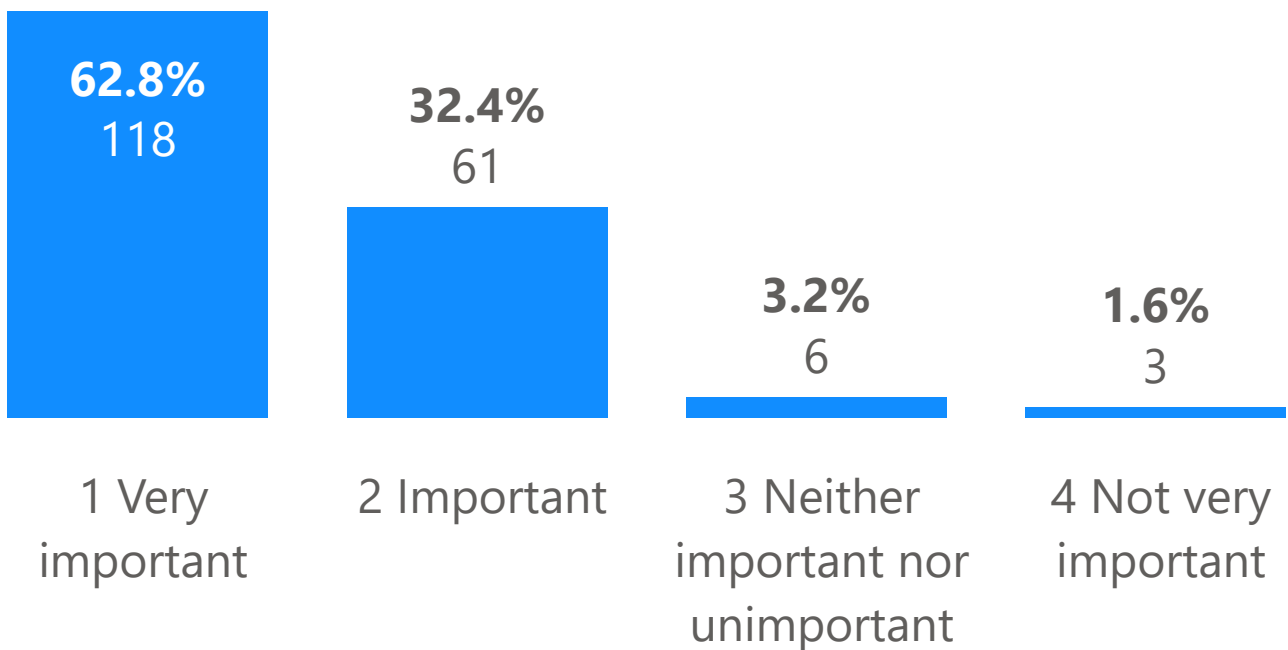
All

Ward

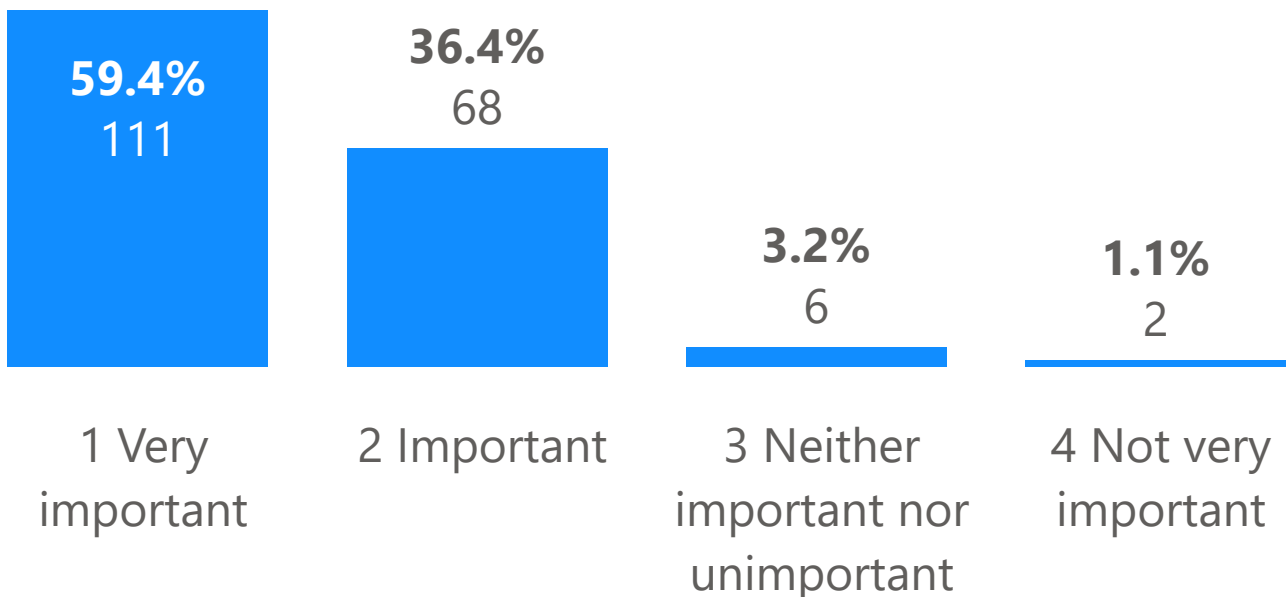
All



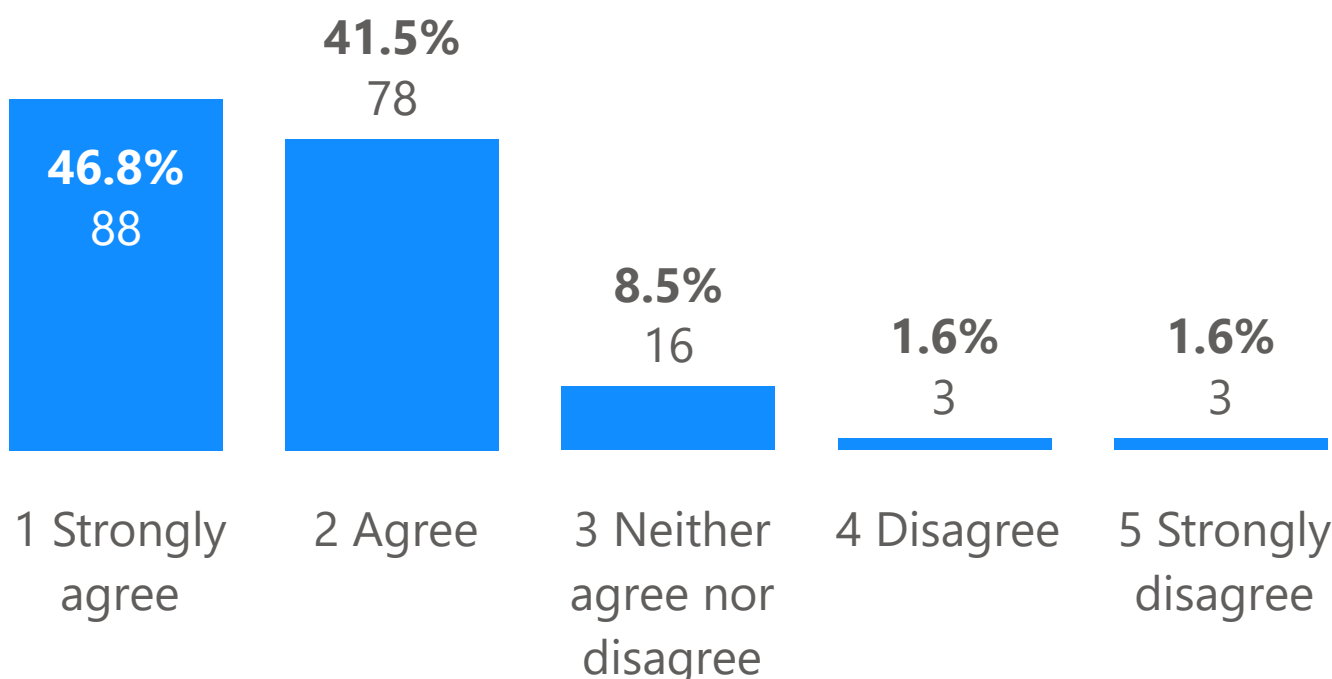
20 How important is access to free computers, Wi-Fi and digital support in libraries?



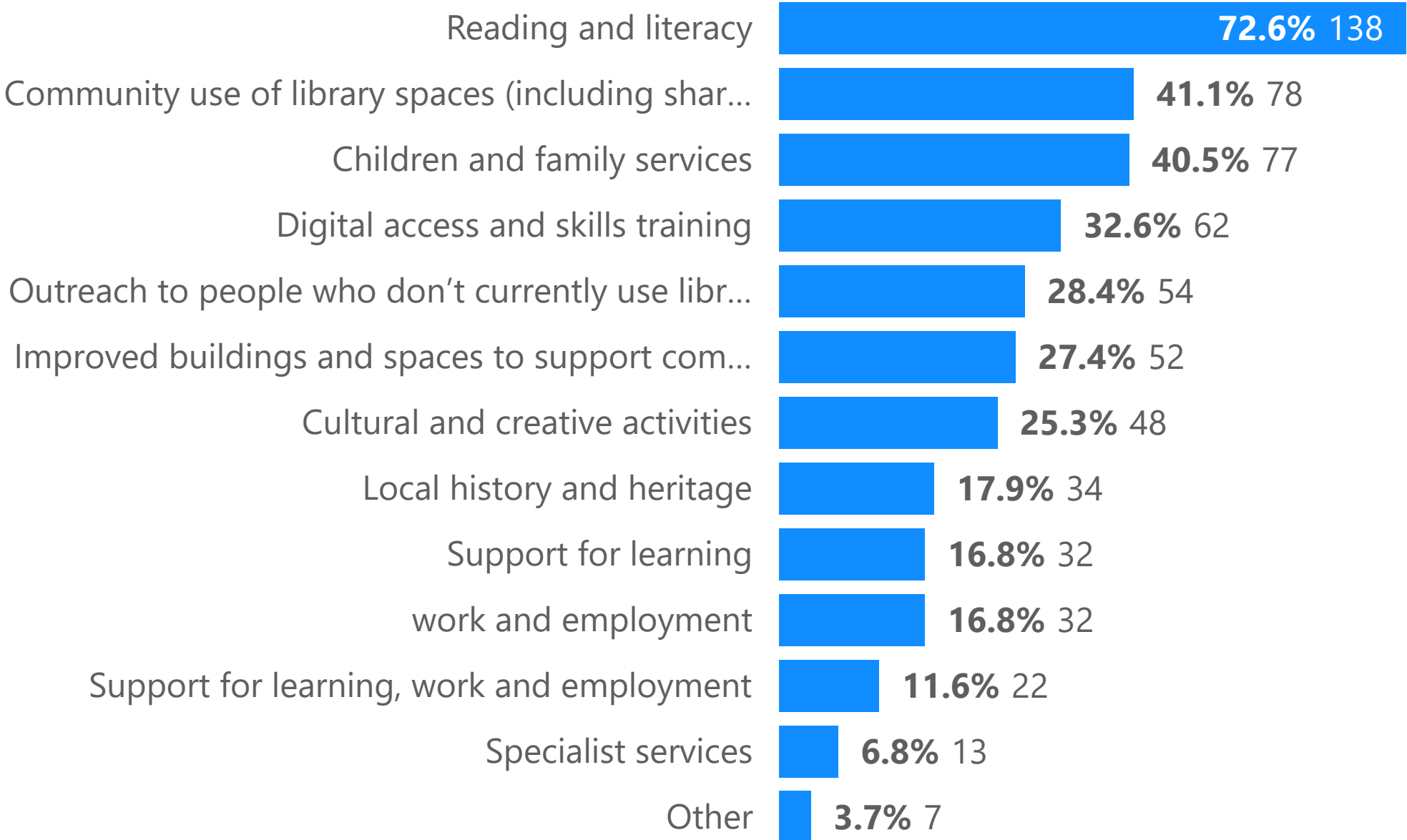
21 How important is it that libraries provide digital support in person, especially for people who may struggle to access services elsewhere?



22 Do you agree that libraries should help people access Council, NHS and partner services online, as part of a wider community support offer?



23 What should libraries prioritise over the next five years? Top 3



Q23a. Other

ALL OF THE ABOVE - SEE Q19 RESPONSE

All of the above. Could split over libraries for them to specialise in different things

Books are much more reliable in giving us a view of people and the world than all the online sources. I would like to see people come back to reading books.

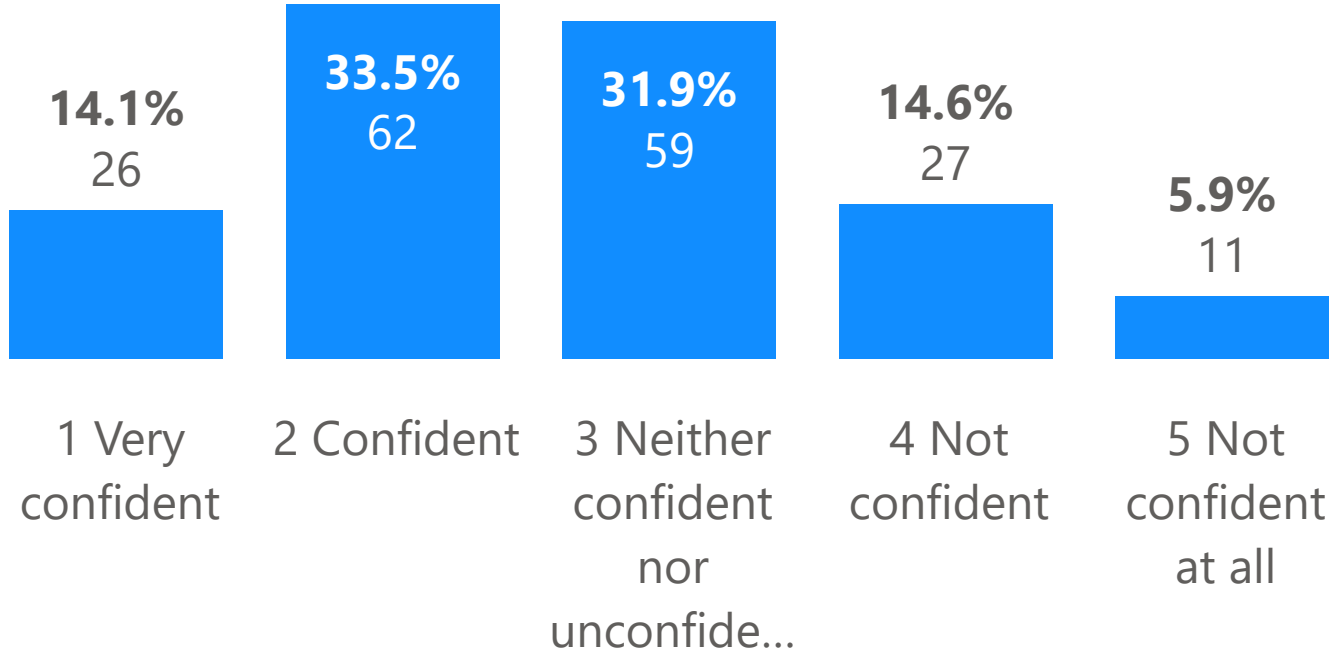
Does the service ever consider if it can apply for funding for projects.

Increase opening hours

Quiet study areas

SEND is a big problem with a lot of residents on Wirral

24 Overall, how confident are you that this strategy will improve Wirral's libraries over the next five years?



4 Which library do you use the most?

All

Ward

All



Number of respondents

106

Q19 What improvements, if any, would you like to see in learning, reading, cultural or wellbeing activities delivered through libraries?

% is calculated as % of those who answered the question. % may add up to more than 100% as responses can cover multiple categories

| Category                                               | Total Mentions | %     | Summary                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Community engagement and partnerships                  | 39             | 36.8% | Libraries are viewed as important community hubs that work best when they build strong partnerships with local groups and organisations.                |
| Engaged staff                                          | 30             | 28.3% | People value consistent, friendly and knowledgeable staff who build trust with users and understand local community needs.                              |
| Cafe/refreshments                                      | 11             | 10.4% | Access to refreshments such as cafés or coffee facilities is seen as making libraries more welcoming and encouraging longer visits.                     |
| Increase funding                                       | 9              | 8.5%  | There is concern that reduced funding limits staff capacity, opening hours and the overall quality of library services.                                 |
| Access and Service Availability                        | 6              | 5.7%  | Feedback highlights the importance of libraries being easy to access with reliable and consistent services.                                             |
| Retain primary function (bookborrowing)                | 5              | 4.7%  | Libraries are seen as first and foremost places for borrowing books, with a strong emphasis on maintaining reading and book access as the core purpose. |
| Variety of activities                                  | 5              | 4.7%  | There is demand for a broader range of activities that appeal to different age groups and interests, beyond traditional library services.               |
| Reference provision                                    | 4              | 3.8%  | Some users value strong reference services and specialist resources to support research and information needs.                                          |
| Reopen libraries                                       | 4              | 3.8%  | Reopening closed libraries is seen as important for restoring local access to activities and services.                                                  |
| Wider opening hours                                    | 4              | 3.8%  | Opening hours, including lunchtime, evening or weekend access, affect who is able to use library services.                                              |
| Availability of facilities                             | 3              | 2.8%  | Comments highlight the need for library spaces and facilities to be fully usable and appropriately equipped.                                            |
| Transparency and clear information                     | 3              | 2.8%  | Clear, accessible information about strategies, plans and services is seen as important for building trust and understanding.                           |
| Encourage Third party providers                        | 2              | 1.9%  | Opening library spaces to third-party and community-led groups is seen as a way to expand provision.                                                    |
| Engage with schools                                    | 2              | 1.9%  | Closer links with schools are seen as a way to encourage learning and reading from an early age.                                                        |
| Hot-desks/workspaces                                   | 2              | 1.9%  | Providing workspace or hot-desking options is seen as a way to support students and people working from home.                                           |
| Out of date book stock                                 | 2              | 1.9%  | Book collections are dated, with insufficient turnover of titles to reflect current interests, issues and culture.                                      |
| Pet friendly                                           | 2              | 1.9%  | A small number of respondents would welcome libraries being pet friendly to support inclusive community use.                                            |
| Physical Accessibility - Transport/parking/lifts/ramps | 2              | 1.9%  | Accessibility related to transport, parking and building layout affects people’s ability to attend and take part.                                       |
| Preserve quiet areas                                   | 2              | 1.9%  | Importance of protecting quiet study and reading areas alongside any expanded community use.                                                            |
| Promotion & advertising                                | 2              | 1.9%  | Better promotion is needed so people are aware of available activities, services and opportunities within libraries.                                    |
| Charges and fines                                      | 1              | 0.9%  | Charges and fines are identified as potential barriers that can discourage people from using libraries.                                                 |
| Child specific events                                  | 1              | 0.9%  | Activities designed specifically for children are viewed as important for engagement and development.                                                   |
| Classes and courses                                    | 1              | 0.9%  | Courses and learning opportunities delivered through libraries are seen as a positive way to support education and wellbeing.                           |
| Limited stock availability (books)                     | 1              | 0.9%  | There are concerns that libraries do not hold enough copies or range of books, leading to long waits and difficulty accessing needed materials.         |
| Support/wellness groups                                | 1              | 0.9%  | Wellbeing and support activities are viewed as a way to reduce isolation and provide community support.                                                 |
| Under-utilised facilities                              | 1              | 0.9%  | Library spaces and facilities are available but not fully used or promoted to support a wider range of services and resources.                          |

# Demographics

## Location of participants

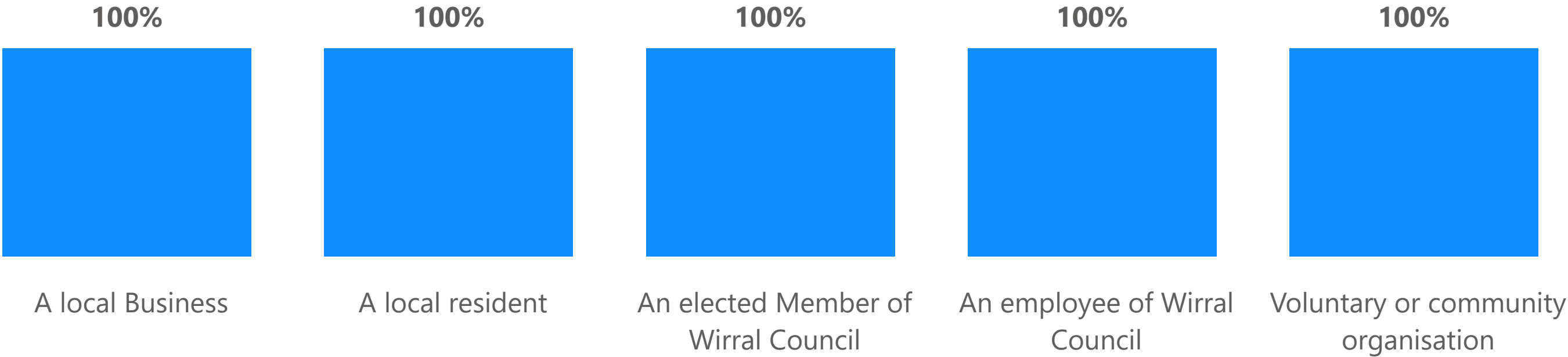
Ward

All

| Ward name                        | Total responses | %      |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------|
| New Brighton                     | 18              | 14.29% |
| Greasby, Frankby and Irby        | 12              | 9.52%  |
| Clatterbridge                    | 9               | 7.14%  |
| Bromborough                      | 8               | 6.35%  |
| West Kirby and Thurstaston       | 8               | 6.35%  |
| Birkenhead and Tranmere          | 7               | 5.56%  |
| Heswall                          | 7               | 5.56%  |
| Moreton West and Saughall Massie | 7               | 5.56%  |
| Wallasey                         | 7               | 5.56%  |
| Seacombe                         | 6               | 4.76%  |
| Hoylake and Meols                | 5               | 3.97%  |
| Pescard                          | 5               | 3.97%  |
| Eastham                          | 5               | 3.97%  |
| Pensby and Thingwall             | 4               | 3.17%  |
| Prenton                          | 3               | 2.38%  |
| Rock Ferry                       | 3               | 2.38%  |
| Bebington                        | 2               | 1.59%  |
| Claughton                        | 2               | 1.59%  |
| Leasowe and Moreton East         | 2               | 1.59%  |
| Upton                            | 2               | 1.59%  |
| Bidston and St James             | 1               | 0.79%  |

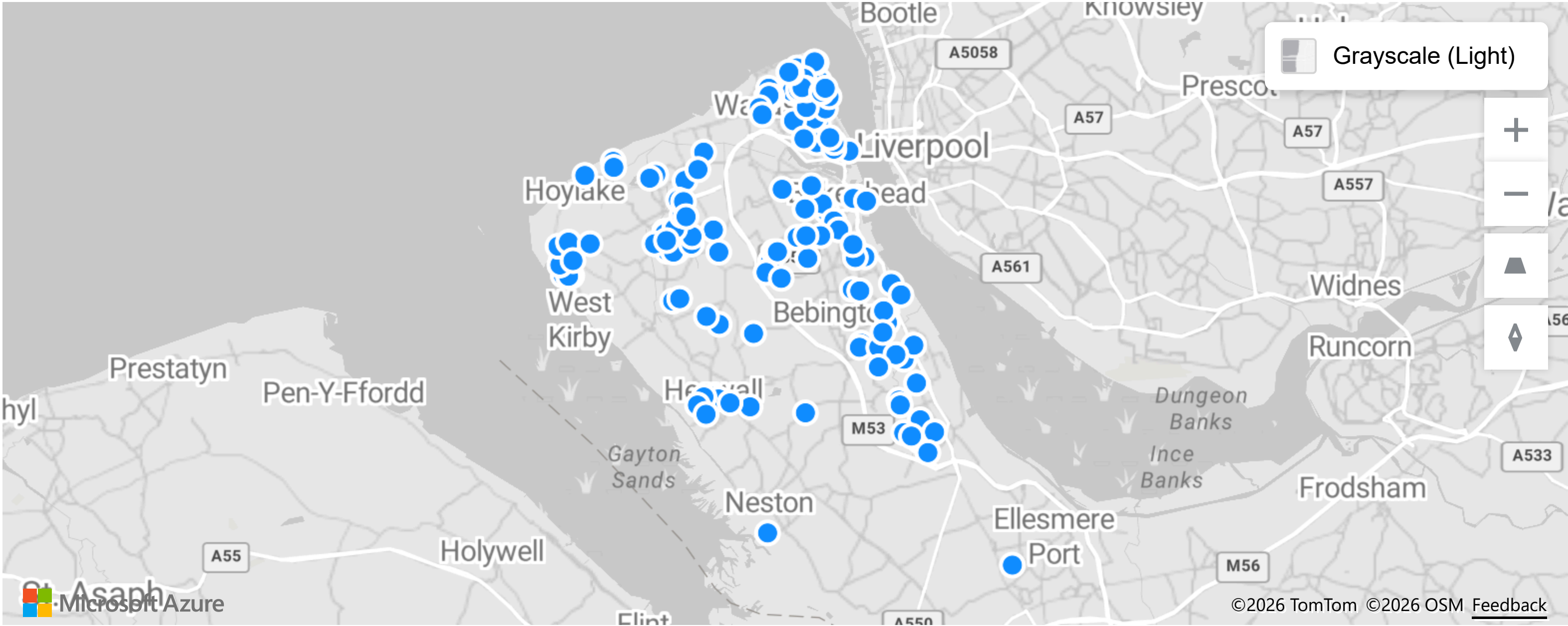
### Are you registering as:

Respondents could select multiple options; percentages may exceed 100%



### Location residence of participants

Where a valid postcode has been provided

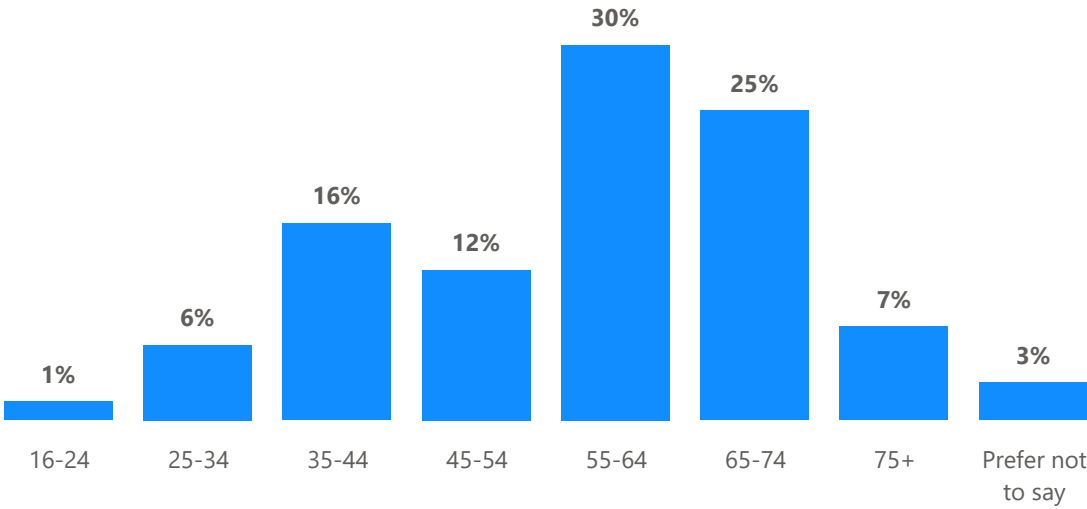


Ward

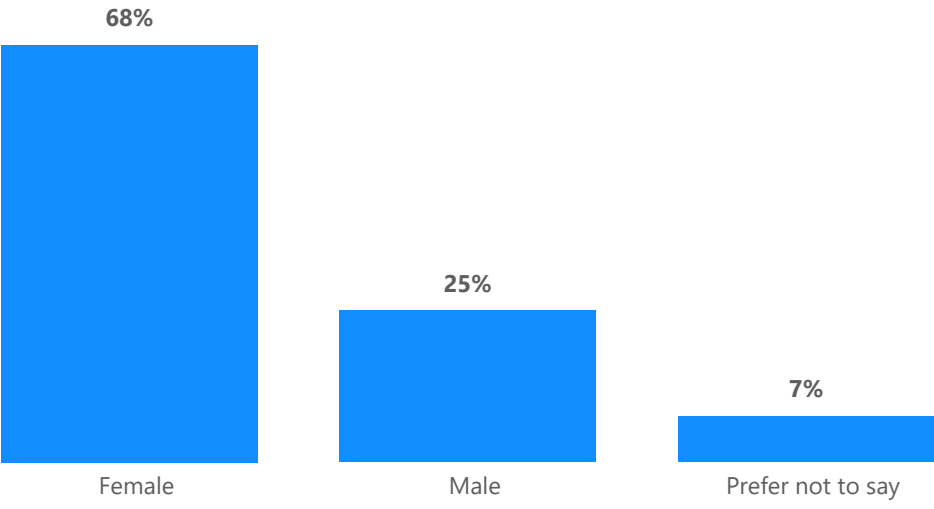
All



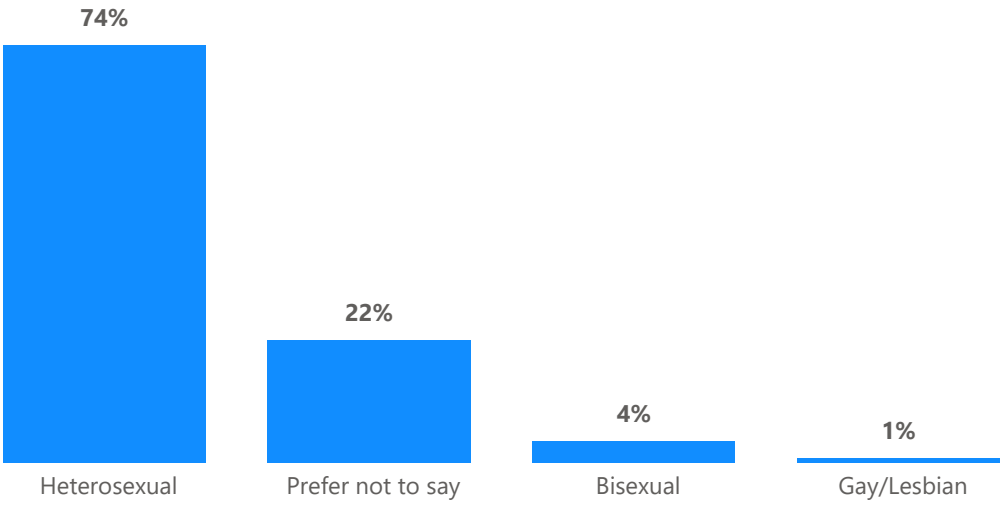
Age group



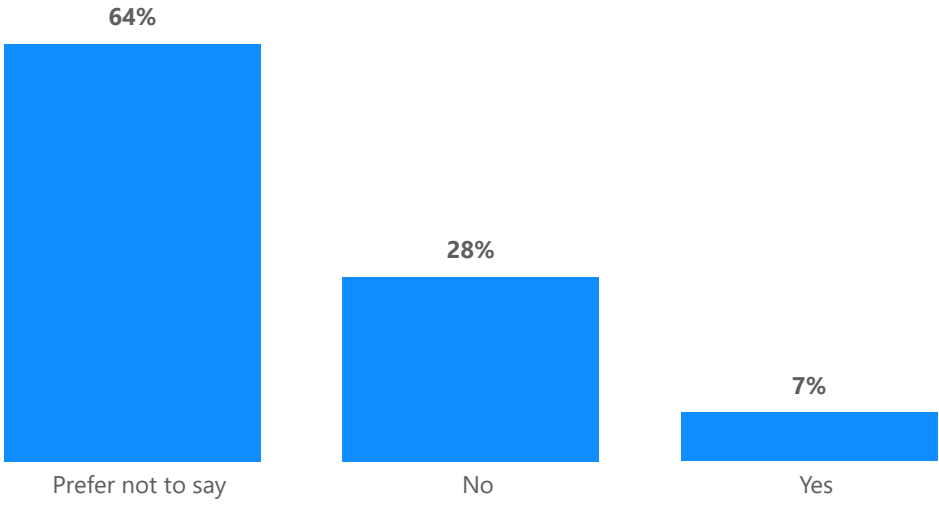
Gender



Gender



Gender



Ethnicity

Which of these groups do you consider you belong to? Total responses %

|                                               |     |         |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|---------|
| Asian or Asian British                        | 2   | 1.49%   |
| Bangladeshi                                   | 1   | 0.75%   |
| Chinese                                       | 1   | 0.75%   |
| Mixed                                         | 1   | 0.75%   |
| White and Asian                               | 1   | 0.75%   |
| Other                                         | 4   | 2.99%   |
| Prefer not to say                             | 4   | 2.99%   |
| Prefer not to say                             | 6   | 4.48%   |
| Prefer not to say                             | 6   | 4.48%   |
| White                                         | 121 | 90.30%  |
| Any other White background                    | 6   | 4.48%   |
| English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British | 113 | 84.33%  |
| Irish                                         | 2   | 1.49%   |
| Total                                         | 134 | 100.00% |

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## **TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE**

**Thursday 22 October 2026**

|                      |                                                                                      |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>REPORT TITLE:</b> | <b>ANNUAL UPDATE REGARDING THE WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE</b> |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b>    | <b>DIRECTOR OF INTERIM OPERATIONS</b>                                                |

### **REPORT**

This report provides an update regarding the work carried out by the Trading Standards Service.

The enforcement work carried out by the Trading Standards Service supports the Council draft Wirral Plan 2027-2031, specifically the first aim : to deliver reliable everyday services so everyone benefits, by updating the Committee regarding the regulatory enforcement work carried out by the Service in the past calendar year.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

This is not a key decision.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is requested to:

Note and endorse the content of the report and highlight any areas requiring further clarification or action

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 To ensure that Members of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee have the opportunity to monitor the performance of the Trading Standards Service. Regular monitoring of performance will ensure public oversight and enable Elected Members to make informed decisions

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS**

- 2.1 This report has been provided in line with a request from Members of this Committee. No other options have been considered.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Trading Standards Service is a regulatory, intelligence led statutory service. The Service is required to carry out the full range of statutory trading standards enforcement duties in relation to weights and measures, food standards, feed standards, product safety. The Service is also required to carry put a range of other functions, as well as non statutory functions such as, intellectual property, fair trading law, door step crime and age restricted sales legislation which includes alcohol, tobacco, vapes, solvents, knives and fireworks.
- 3.2 The Service works in conjunction with partner agencies such as His Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC), Food Standards Agency, Department of Economic, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Office of Product Safety and Standards, Merseyside Police and Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.
- 3.3 The Trading Standards Service also works in partnership with the central government agency the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline Service. The Consumer Service triages all first line enquires and complaints on behalf of Trading Standards and will provide civil advice to consumers. The Trading Standards Service only provides a criminal enforcement service. In the past year the Service received 1863 enquiries from the consumer service and further 270 direct enquires to the generic Team's mailbox. The Trading Standards Team Leader will review all enquiries and approximately 814 enquiries were allocated to an officer within the service for further investigation and/or intervention.
- 3 4 The Service participated in several multi-agency operations with partner agencies such as Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire Service and HMRC, including Operation Shea (targeting Organised Criminal Groups (OCG) related criminality in the Borough), Operation Sceptre (knives), Operation Banger (fireworks), Operation Joseph (vapes) and Operation CeCe (tobacco). (Further details are provided in Appendix 1 of this report).
- 3.5 In conjunction with colleagues in Legal Services, the Service has instigated legal proceedings in two cases. One case was brought to a successful conclusion and the other case is still before the Courts awaiting Trial in June 2027. (A summary of the cases is provided in Appendix 1)

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no financial implications.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 In recent years, the Trading Standards Service has struggled with recruitment and retention of qualified and competent officers. Currently the Service has three officers enrolled to undertake the statutory qualifications to become fully qualified Trading Standards Officers. As a result of the recruitment struggles and to ensure that the service can carry out its statutory functions, the service has had to engage contractors.

6.2 In 2024 Wirral Council's Public Health Service agreed to grant fund two fixed term posts within the Trading Standards Service for two years to tackle issues related to the supply of illicit and illegal Tobacco, Vapes and Alcohol within the Borough.

6.3 In March of 2026, the Service was successful in securing further grant funding from Public Health to extend the fixed term contract of the Regulatory Compliance Officer (Tobacco) post until 31 March 2029.

6.4 This grant funding from Public Health has helped to build additional capacity and resilience within the Service, to tackle the ongoing issues of businesses trading in illegal tobacco and vape products.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 Currently the Trading Standards Service is struggling with a lack of qualified and competent officers to carry out its statutory duties. The Service has 2.5FTE vacant posts and is unable to recruit to those posts. The Service has used a contractor to support delivery statutory duties. The Service is currently mentoring three apprentices who are undertaking their professional L6 trading standards qualification and due to qualify in 2027 and 2028. The apprentices will then commence their studies to obtain their specialist trading standards qualifications.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 There are no engagement or consultation implications arising out of this report.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity. There are no direct equality implications from this report.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no environmental and climate implications generated by the recommendations in this report.
- 10.2 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO2.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The work carried out by the Trading Standards Service supports the economic growth of Wirral by ensuring businesses within the Borough trade in a fair and legally compliant manner, supplying goods and services to residents and consumers that are safe. If any non-compliances are identified at a business, the service will take appropriate enforcement action to remove unsafe or illegal goods from the supply chain.

## **12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 The Council has a statutory duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to, without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment). The Trading Standards Service has applied to the Magistrates Court for closure orders in relation to businesses within the Borough that have been found to continuously trade in illegal goods
- 12.2 The Trading Standards Service is a frontline statutory enforcement service which carries out statutory inspections in relation to food and feed standards, weights and measures and product safety and strives to ensure businesses trade in a legally compliant manner. If the service identifies a breach of legislation, then the service will adopt a staged enforcement approach in line with Wirral Council's enforcement policy.
- 12.3 The Trading Standards Service will input intelligence reports onto the national trading standards intelligence database (IDB) regarding an individual or business which is not trading in a legally compliant manner. This provides a legal gateway for the service to lawfully share intelligence with other enforcement agencies to tackle crime and disorder.

**REPORT AUTHOR:**    **Name Gill Vicary**  
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0151 691 8377  
email: [gillvicary@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:gillvicary@wirral.gov.uk)

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Update report in relation to the enforcement work carried out by the Trading Standards Service.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE :

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee has responsibility for customer contact, community development and community services, including all of those functions related to community safety and also those regarding the promotion of community engagement.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for the Council's role and functions:-

(i) for trading standards and environmental health, including but not limited to:

- i. consumer protection;
- ii. product safety;
- iii. fair trading;
- iv. metrology;
- v. food standards

## SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting                                     | Date       |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee | 23/10/2025 |
| Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee | 19/09/2024 |

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Multi-agency work**

The Trading Standards Service has participated in several multi-agency operations with partner agencies during the past year:

#### **Operation Shea**

Operation Shea (previously Operation Evolve) is a project designed to continue to provide a disruptive presence across Wirral and maintain momentum when targeting Organised Criminal Groups (OCG) related criminality in the Borough.

Officers from the Trading Standards Service work in partnership with Merseyside Police and other enforcement partner agencies on co-ordinated days of action within the Borough.

The results from this operation so far are :

- Over £1M of electricity theft identified
- Illegal Gas Supply's removed
- 6 Business premises shut down
- Persons & Property safeguarded
- Modern Slavery identified & reported
- Working Partnerships created
- Utility fines issued totalling over £100,000

### **Closure Orders**

This Service has worked closely with Legal Services to implement new approach to tackling the increasing number of businesses within the borough, which engage in the sale of illicit tobacco and vapes

The Service has successfully secured 23 closure orders from the Magistrates Court. Each order closes a business for three months. There have been a further 6 premises where the closure order has been extended, so the businesses have effectively been closed for 6 months.

The Service will actively monitor the business premise to ensure it remains closed. If it is identified that a business has started trading again whilst an order is in place, then the Service will return to Court to apply to have the order extended for a further three months.

A workshop will be planned with members by the end of the municipal year.

## **Operation Banger**

Operation Banger covers the key Halloween /Bonfire period from 28th October until 5th November each year.

Officers work closely with multi-agency partners to ensure retailers do not sell fireworks to persons under 18 years of age. Compliance visits are carried out to all retailers licensed by the Fire Service and legal advice and guidance will be provided to the businesses regarding the sale of fireworks.

## **Operation CeCe**

This operation is a collaboration between HMRC and Trading Standards Services to tackle the supply and trade in illegal tobacco.

Trade in illegal tobacco undermines legitimate traders, including small, independent shops that serve local communities, and takes funding away from vital public services. Co-ordinated activity such as Operation CeCe is vital to ensure that we are creating a level playing field for businesses and consumers.

The aim of this project is to reduce the demand for illicit tobacco products, by tackling organised crime gangs which supply businesses with illicit tobacco products.

In the past year, this Service has seized 118517 illegal cigarettes and 23,000KG of illegal hand rolling tobacco (HRT) from Wirral businesses. In line with Wirral Council's enforcement policy, staged enforcement action has been implemented by the service. Frequently the seizure of illegal tobacco products will support the evidence bundle submitted to the Magistrate's Court to seek a closure order against a business which continually trades in illegal tobacco products. .

## **Operation Joseph**

The Government announced in May 2023 that funds were to be made available to National Trading Standards (NTS) for enhanced work and coordination across England regarding the sales of vapes to young persons (under the age of 18) and the supply of illegal vapes, that are non-compliant with UK legislation.

Local authority Trading Standards Services contribute to this project by conducting enforcement and compliance inspections and seizing non-compliant vapes. In the past year this service has seized 4367 illicit vapes and 250 illicit vape pods from Wirral businesses.

Officers have engaged with the businesses supplying the illicit vapes and in line with Wirral Council's enforcement policy, issued warning letters to the businesses and the businesses have agreed to sign over the illicit products to the Service for forfeiture and destruction. Also, the businesses have signed undertakings to cease and desist from supplying illegal and illicit products.

In total the service has removed approximately £250,000 worth of illegal tobacco products from the marketplace. Businesses who trade in the sale or supply of illegal tobacco products do not pay money to the Treasury, which in turn takes money away from frontline public sector services.

### **HMRC Sanctions :**

A memorandum of understanding is in place between Wirral Council's Trading Standards Service and HMRC. This allows a legal gateway for the respective enforcement agencies to share intelligence about businesses supplying illicit and illegal tobacco and vapes products.

The Trading Standards Service can also refer individuals and/or businesses to HMRC where non-duty paid tobacco is being sold for them to consider imposing a sanction in respect of tax evasion.

To date the HMRC have concluded one investigation relating to a Wirral business resulting in a penalty being imposed by the HMRC totalling £5000.

### **Prosecutions:**

In conjunction with Wirral Council's Legal Services, Trading Standards summonsed the following businesses:

#### **Case 1 : Building works to a residential property**

This prosecution relates to a business who contracted to carry out home improvement and /or building services for a resident. The trader has been summonsed in relation to two allegations relating to fraud by false representation, as well as three regulatory allegations an offence of engaging in an unfair commercial practice by way of a misleading action as regards the identity of the said trader.

The defendant pleaded guilty to the five summonses before Liverpool Magistrates Court.

The Magistrates sentenced the defendant to 45 weeks custody in relation to two fraud act offences, suspended for 18 months.

No separate penalty for the three regulatory offences.

A requirement to carry out 100 hours unpaid work.

A compensation order was granted to the consumer of £2000.

A victim surcharge of £187.

A contribution towards prosecution costs of £4000

## **Case 2 : Building works to a residential property**

This prosecution relates to a business who contracted to carry out home improvement and /or building services for a resident. The trader has been charged in respect of allegations relating to fraud by false representation, as well as an offence of engaging in an unfair commercial practice by way of a misleading action as regards the identity of the said trader.

This case is listed for Trial in June 2027.

### **Cautions:**

In conjunction with Wirral Council's Legal Services, Trading Standards cautioned one business.

## **Case 1**

This case involved a public house which was exposing for sale a bottle of Smirnoff Vodka which upon inspection by dip test indicated that the contents were not Smirnoff Vodka. The bottle was sent for analysis at the Public Analyst to determine its contents.

The Public Analyst confirmed that the sample of the vodka analysed indicated that the percentage alcohol by volume was 3.7% lower than the strength indicated on the bottle. This was outside the negative tolerance permitted. Analysis also showed the sugar content of the sample being significantly different from that of an authentic bottle of Smirnoff vodka.

Section 14 of the Food Safety Act 1990 provides for an offence to possess, sell or offer for sale food (including drink) that is not of the nature, substance or quality demanded. Section 15 of the Food Safety Act 1990 provides for an offence to falsely describe food.

Regulation 5 of the Food Information Regulations 2014 provides for an offence to not make available to consumers any information relating to allergens which were used as ingredients in the food.

Schedule 20, paragraph 10 of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 makes it an offence for you to create the impression that a product can legally be sold, when it cannot.

Following an investigation by this Service, the Designated Premises Supervisor and the Premise Licence Holder for the public house, both signed a caution admitting the offences.

## **Statutory Inspections**

The Service undertook 382 statutory inspections during the past year. This included inspections at factories, public houses, petrol stations, retail outlets and farms in relation to a variety of statutory functions including weights & measures, food and feed standards and product safety.

Officers engage with local businesses to ensure they are trading in a legally compliant manner.

Occasionally the inspections carried out, are part of national or regional projects, which included:

Food Standards Agency : feed standards delivery programme: 15 high risk inspections completed

Regional Licensed Premise (pubs) Project:

This Service participated in the regional Trading Standards Northwest licensed premise project, with the following results being reported :

A total of 49 premises inspected in the region

Fourteen (14) premises failed to display the statutory weights and measures notice

Eleven (11) premises failed to display a price list

Ten (10) premises were found to have unstamped equipment

One premise had non-compliant alcohol ( Wirral)

Regional Packaged Goods Project:

This Service participated in the regional Trading Standards Northwest packaged goods project, with the following results being reported :

Five (5) premises were inspected. A total of forty-three (43) different product lines were inspected. There were three (3) packages below T1, short weight and no packages were below T2.(legally no package should be below T2).

### **TSNW Regional Children's Survey**

The Service participated in the bi-annual Trading Standards Northwest Children's Survey.

Since 2005 this Service, in partnership with schools, has conducted a study to monitor and evaluate the behaviour and attitudes of young people (15–16-year-olds) towards alcohol, tobacco and e-cigarettes. In recent years we have included questions about knives to try to understand how young people are using these products and where they are sourcing them from. The 2025 survey wanted to address the issue of disposable vapes as head teachers and parents have reported their concerns that young people are accessing such products in increasing quantities. The survey will help to understand this behaviour and help to target appropriate enforcement activity

Engagement with schools and participation in the survey was supported by colleagues in Public Health.

In summary the key points from the survey for Wirral school are :

- Number of 14–17-year-olds abstaining from alcohol has reached its highest ever level – 62% of respondents don't drink (up from 48% in 2023).
- Significant drop in the percentage of young people trying vapes from 41% in 2023 to 24% in 2026
- Percentage of young people smoking is at an all-time low of 1% with 94% having never tried a cigarette

### **Community Alcohol Projects (CAP)**

In Wirral there are four Community Alcohol Partnerships

In Summer 2026, officers conducted inspections in conjunction with colleagues from Licensing Services to licensed premises within West Kirby. In total 7 premises were inspected and officers identified breaches of licensing conditions in 4 businesses. Officers provided advice to the businesses to ensure they traded in a legally compliant manner in future and warning letters were sent to the businesses.

In addition officers provided proxy sales leaflets and posters to all businesses within the locality.



**TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, 22 October 2026**

|                      |                                                               |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>REPORT TITLE:</b> | <b>ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY - VISITOR ECONOMY AND CULTURE</b> |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b>    | <b>HEAD OF PLACE, CULTURE &amp; VISITOR ECONOMY</b>           |

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report updates the Committee on the emerging priorities for Culture and the Visitor Economy and how they will inform the development of Wirral's Economic Growth Strategy 2027–2032 and 2045 Vision. It outlines the evidence base, emerging priorities and the importance of partnership working to support economic growth, regeneration, culture, heritage and the visitor economy across the borough.

## **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee with an update on the emerging priorities for Culture and the Visitor Economy and how these will inform two important emerging strategic documents:

- Wirral's Economic Growth Strategy 2027–2032; and
- the refresh of the Council's regeneration framework, previously known as the Birkenhead 2040 Framework, which will be developed as 2045 Vision.

Both documents provide an opportunity to set a clear long-term direction for Wirral's economy and regeneration and to ensure that Culture, Heritage, Creativity and the Visitor Economy contribute fully to economic growth, successful places and improved outcomes for Wirral residents. The emerging approach is to embed Culture and Visitor Economy priorities within the wider Economic Growth Strategy and 2045 Vision, strengthening their relationship with the borough's wider approach to economic growth, regeneration and place development.

This report sets out the current evidence base, the emerging strategic priorities for Culture and the Visitor Economy and the proposed approach to delivery, including the important role of partners. It also sets out the opportunity to strengthen Wirral's position within the wider Liverpool City Region visitor and cultural offer, working collaboratively with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership and other partners.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to:

1: Note the emerging strategic priorities for Culture and the Visitor Economy and their relationship to the development of Wirral's Economic Growth Strategy 2027–2032 and 2045 Vision.

2: Support the principle of strengthening Wirral's position as a key visitor destination within the Liverpool City Region offer, whilst developing and promoting Wirral's distinctive identity, assets and experiences; and

3: Note the importance of partnership working in delivering these priorities, including collaboration with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership and Wirral's cultural, heritage, creative and visitor economy sectors.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The Culture and Visitor Economy priorities will inform the ongoing development of the Economic Growth Strategy 2027–2032 and 2045 Vision. Officers will continue to work across Council services and with external partners to develop the approach, with a focus on deliverable activity and clearly defined roles for the Council and partners.

This will include:

- refining the evidence base and establishing appropriate measures and baselines;
- identifying opportunities to increase the economic value of the Visitor Economy, particularly through overnight stays, visitor spend and year-round demand;
- strengthening the role of culture, heritage, events and creative industries within regeneration and place development;
- maximising opportunities presented by major Liverpool City Region cultural and sporting events;
- clarifying Council and partner roles in the delivery of shared priorities; and
- identifying opportunities for external investment and funding.

No additional funding is requested through this report. Any future proposals with financial implications will be subject to the appropriate business case and approval processes.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

Culture and the Visitor Economy make an important contribution to Wirral's economy and wider place ambitions. The latest available STEAM data estimates that the Visitor Economy generated £547.5 million for the Wirral economy in 2025 and supported approximately 4,825 jobs. Since 2022, the economic value of the Visitor Economy has increased from £442.5 million to £547.5 million, an increase of approximately 24%. This provides a strong base from which to focus on increasing visitor value, overnight stays, length of stay and year-round demand.

Culture, heritage, creativity and events also contribute to regeneration, destination appeal, town-centre vitality, employment, enterprise, investment and community wealth building. Integrating these areas within the wider Economic Growth Strategy and Vision 2045 provides an opportunity to strengthen their relationship with the Council's economic development, regeneration and place activity.

Delivery cannot be achieved by the Council alone. The emerging approach therefore recognises the importance of collaboration with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Local Visitor Economy Partnership, cultural and heritage organisations, visitor attractions, businesses, creative organisations, education and skills providers, investors, developers and communities.

## **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

2.1 An alternative approach would be to develop standalone strategies for Culture and the Visitor Economy. The emerging approach instead seeks to embed these priorities within the Economic Growth Strategy 2027–2032 and 2045 Vision, strengthening their relationship with economic growth, regeneration and place development.

2.2 This approach also recognises the cross-cutting nature of Culture and the Visitor Economy and the importance of working collaboratively across Council services and with external partners. No new resource request is made through this report.

## **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3.1 Hotel occupancy is currently around 83.5%, demonstrating continued demand for accommodation within the borough.

3.2 Whilst visitor numbers have remained broadly stable, economic value has increased. This indicates an opportunity to focus future activity on visitor value, overnight stays, length of stay and year-round demand rather than visitor numbers alone.

3.3 Wirral benefits from a distinctive combination of coastal, cultural, heritage and leisure assets, including Birkenhead Park, Port Sunlight, New Brighton waterfront, Williamson Art Gallery, Floral Pavilion, Birkenhead Priory, Eureka! Science + Discovery and a growing network of cultural organisations, creative businesses and visitor attractions.

3.4 Culture and heritage make an important contribution to economic activity, place identity and destination appeal. Wirral's Borough of Culture programme in 2024 engaged more than 85,000 participants, involved more than 370 artists and reached more than 4,500 young people.

3.5 Culture and the Visitor Economy are increasingly connected to regeneration programmes and opportunities across the borough. This includes coastal and waterfront destination development, Birkenhead's cultural and heritage assets, visitor attractions and investment at Port Sunlight, the activation of regeneration sites and public spaces, and cultural and creative activity supporting town-centre vitality.

3.6 Major events have demonstrated their ability to generate economic value, attract visitors and raise Wirral's national and international profile. The Open Championship in 2023 generated an estimated £196 million economic impact and attracted more than 261,000 visitors.

3.7 Other sporting and cultural activity, including the Tour of Britain, Borough of Culture and Three Queens programme, has demonstrated the contribution that events can make to visitor expenditure, destination profile and local participation.

3.8 The pipeline of major events within the Liverpool City Region provides further opportunities. Events including the Tour de France Grand Départ 2027, UEFA EURO 2028 and major cultural programming provide opportunities for Wirral to attract visitors, encourage overnight stays and capture a greater share of regional visitor expenditure.

3.9 Wirral forms part of a Liverpool City Region visitor economy with significant national and international reach. Working through the Liverpool City Region Local Visitor Economy Partnership provides opportunities for collaborative destination marketing, data and insight, travel trade activity and destination development.

3.10 Wirral can benefit from the strength of Liverpool's visitor offer whilst continuing to develop its own distinctive destination proposition. The borough's coastline, heritage, golf, culture, countryside, attractions and waterfront provide opportunities to encourage visitors to explore more of Wirral and increase their length of stay and expenditure.

3.11 The creative industries also provide opportunities for economic growth. Organisations and assets including Future Yard, Make CIC, Start Yard and Focal Point form part of a growing creative network supporting enterprise, innovation, talent development and employment.

3.12 There is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between creative industries, culture, the Visitor Economy and regeneration, including through creative workspace, business development, cultural production and opportunities associated with investment in the borough.

3.13 The Visitor Economy, hospitality, culture, heritage, creative industries and events also provide routes into employment, skills development and enterprise. This creates opportunities to support apprenticeships, creative career pathways, workforce development, local employment and stronger local supply chains.

## **3.2 EMERGING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

Drawing on the evidence base and opportunities outlined above, five emerging priorities have been identified for Culture and the Visitor Economy.

### **Priority 1 – Grow the Visitor Economy**

The focus will be on increasing the economic value of the Visitor Economy through increased overnight stays, visitor expenditure, length of stay and year-round demand. Areas of focus include destination marketing and development, new visitor experiences and attractions, increasing overnight stays and encouraging visitor activity outside peak periods.

### **Priority 2 – Culture, Heritage and Regeneration**

The focus will be on strengthening the role of culture and heritage within regeneration and place development. Areas of focus include Birkenhead, coastal towns and waterfront locations, cultural assets and venues, heritage-led regeneration and the activation of public spaces and town centres.

### **Priority 3 – Major Events and Destination Development**

The focus will be on maximising the economic and destination benefits associated with cultural, sporting and visitor events. Areas of focus include the legacy of The Open, sporting and outdoor events, music, festivals and cultural programming, opportunities arising from Liverpool City Region major events and the development of coastal, cultural and family-focused events.

#### **Priority 4 – Creative Industries and Cultural Enterprise**

The focus will be on supporting the growth of creative businesses, cultural organisations, freelancers and the wider creative ecosystem. Areas of focus include enterprise support, cultural production, workspace, business growth and talent retention and development.

#### **Priority 5 – Skills, Employment and Community Wealth Building**

The focus will be on maximising the local economic and social benefits arising from Culture and Visitor Economy activity. Areas of focus include apprenticeships, skills and employment pathways, local procurement, supply-chain development and social value.

### **3.3 DELIVERY AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

Culture and the Visitor Economy are important contributors to Wirral's economy, identity and regeneration ambitions, supporting employment, visitor spend, town-centre vitality and the attractiveness of places in which people live, work, invest and visit. Given the breadth of the agenda and finite public resources, delivery will require a partnership approach.

The Council will not directly deliver all activity associated with the emerging priorities. Depending on priority or intervention, the Council's role may include strategic leadership and coordination, convening partners, embedding Culture and Visitor Economy considerations within regeneration and economic development programmes, supporting external investment and funding opportunities, and directly delivering activities where appropriate and within available resources.

In other areas, delivery will be led by partners, with the Council acting as an enabler or facilitator. Key partners include the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Local Visitor Economy Partnership, cultural and heritage organisations, visitor attractions, hospitality and tourism businesses, creative businesses and organisations, town and place partnerships, transport providers, education and skills organisations, communities, investors and developers.

### **3.4 OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE**

As the Economic Growth Strategy 2027-2032 and 2045 Vision are developed, appropriate measures, baselines and performance indicators will be established to monitor progress and assess impact.

The emerging priorities set out in this report are intended to inform that process. Outcome measures that support the delivery of Priorities 1-5 will be considered through the development of the Economic Growth Strategy and 2045 Vision, alongside wider economic, regeneration and place-based objectives.

### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from noting the emerging strategic priorities for Culture and the Visitor Economy. Further development of the approach will be undertaken within existing Officer capacity, using available datasets and partnership channels. Any future proposals requiring additional resources will be subject to separate approval.

4.2 As part of the Council's 2021/22 budget consultation, a major reduction of £620,000 was proposed for the culture and visitor economy service. The saving would be achieved by staff reductions and reducing the revenue budgets to around £100,000, leaving only a reduced resource within the regeneration team and transferring marketing functions to the corporate communications team to maintain visitor economy visibility and participate in local marketing. This decision means there is limited council funding available to run cultural or VE programmes in the current or upcoming financial years.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

No direct legal implications arise from noting the emerging strategic priorities set out within this report. Any subsequent projects will be subject to relevant legal, procurement and compliance requirements. Procurement will follow Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contracts Regulations; data protection will be ensured.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

Further development of the Culture and Visitor Economy priorities will be delivered by existing staff within the Place, Culture & Visitor Economy team, with potential support from other services and external partners. No additional staffing or ICT investment is requested at this stage.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

**Resources and deliverability:** The breadth of the Culture and Visitor Economy agenda may exceed the resources directly available to the Council.

**Mitigation:** prioritise activity according to economic and strategic impact; clearly define Council and partner roles; maximise external investment and funding opportunities.

**Stakeholder fragmentation:** Diverse partners may have differing priorities.

**Mitigation:** use existing forums and partnership structures; establish shared priorities and clarify roles in delivery.

**Reliance on external partners and investment:** A number of opportunities are dependent on organisations and funding outside the Council's direct control.

**Mitigation:** maintain strong relationships with Liverpool City Region and local partners; identify opportunities early; ensure proposals are investment-ready where appropriate.

**Failure to maximise wider opportunities:** Wirral may not fully benefit from major Liverpool City Region events, regeneration investment and growth in the regional Visitor Economy.

Mitigation: strengthen links between destination development, events, regeneration and regional activity and identify opportunities for Wirral to capture visitor demand and expenditure.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

Development and delivery of the emerging priorities will utilise existing partnership structures and LVEP forums, business networks, cultural and heritage organisations, visitor attractions, creative businesses, transport operators, education and skills organisations and community partners. Engagement will also align, where appropriate, with wider activity undertaken in the development of the Economic Growth Strategy 2027–2032 and Vision 2045.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be completed prior to the final adoption and implementation of the Economic Growth Strategy and 2045 Vision. The findings will be used to inform the final documents and identify any necessary mitigating actions.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

The emerging Culture and Visitor Economy priorities will align with Cool 2 and the GBI Strategy. The approach will support sustainable and active travel, responsible visitor behaviour, the appropriate management and use of coastal and natural assets and opportunities to encourage visitor activity across seasons and locations.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

The emerging Culture and Visitor Economy priorities will be aligned with:

Wirral Local Plan -, town-centre renewal, heritage and environmental quality, active travel and sustainable communities.

Council Plan 2023–2027 – outcomes-led performance culture; financial sustainability; tackling inequality; clean and safe neighbourhoods; inclusive economy.

Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022–2027 – creating healthy places; maximising health impacts of regeneration; active lifestyles; addressing disparities.

GBI Strategy – quality public realm, access to blue/green assets, active travel corridors and climate resilience.

LCR DMP 2025–2030 and LVEP – complementarity with regional positioning, data sharing, travel trade and the wider visitor economy ecosystem.

## **12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS: NONE**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** CHRIS HAN: HEAD OF PLACE, CULTURE & VISITOR ECONOMY

**APPENDICES:** NONE

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee under its terms of reference for economic development, culture and visitor economy matters.

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

| <b>Council Meeting</b> | <b>Date</b> |
|------------------------|-------------|
|                        |             |



## TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday 22 October 2026

|               |                                              |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REPORT TITLE: | MEMBER CHAMPION FOR HERITAGE – UPDATE REPORT |
| REPORT OF:    | MEMBER CHAMPION FOR HERITAGE                 |

### REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out recent events and updates from the Member Champion for Heritage to the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee. The update from the Member Champion for Heritage is attached at appendix 1. The update from the Principal Heritage Officer is attached at appendix 2.

This report affects all wards.

This is not a key decision.

### RECOMMENDATION/S

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to note the contents of the report and attached appendices.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 Following the meeting of the Tourism, Communities Culture and Leisure Committee on 24 July 2024, it was agreed that a regular, written report would be brought to the committee from the Member Champion for Heritage.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 No other options were considered. It had been agreed by members that a regular written report be brought to committee.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee is to appoint a Member Champion in relation to matters concerning the Borough's heritage. Following the appointment of Councillor Williams at the meeting of the 24 July 2024, the Committee requested that the Member Champion for Heritage bring a regular, written report to every meeting to update the committee on events relating to heritage.

### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 Not applicable to this report.

### **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Not applicable to this report.

### **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

### **10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no environment and climate implications arising directly from this report.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no community wealth implications arising directly from this report.

## **12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** **Councillor Jerry Williams**  
Member Champion for Heritage  
email: jerrywilliams@wirral.gov.uk

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Report of the Member Champion for Heritage

Appendix 2 – Report of the Principal Heritage Officer

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in accordance with Section (f) of its Terms of Reference, “concerning tourism, the arts, culture and heritage, including provision of theatre, entertainments, conferences and events”.

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

| <b>Council Meeting</b>                                     | <b>Date</b>         |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee</b> | <b>24 July 2024</b> |

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# HERITAGE CHAMPION REPORT OCTOBER 2026

## FORMATION OF A TOURIST TRAIL FOR TOURISM PROMOTION:

This endeavour to bring together Heritage Interpretation Plinths/signs/Memorial/Blue Plaques is moving forward well. I believe some funding has been allocated to this project and to some other areas. This will cover various costs, including promotional brochures, to go far and wide. The funding is for, the production of promotional and visitor information materials, heritage trail improvements and interpretation projects and wider activity aimed at improving awareness and accessibility of Wirral's Historic Environment. These projects will strengthen the connection between heritage, place making and the visitor economy while encouraging greater engagement with historic assets. Expansion , also, with the Blue Plaque programme.

## OFFICERS ATTENDED AN HOSPITALITY CONFERENCE AS PART of A CITY REGION DELEGATION:

This conference, held in Manchester, is recognised as the 'UK' and operations event, bringing together investors. A leading hospitality investment, development and operations event. Attracting 1100 decision makers and provides a valuable platform to promote places, build partnerships and explore opportunities for inward investment and visitor economy. This was to raise Wirral's profile within the visitor economy sector. I have commented that Chair and Vice Chair of TCCL Committee, should be invited to this event in the future.

## BIRKENHEAD TOWN OF CULTURE BID 2028:

The workshop on this, recently, was well put together, with really ,valuable contributions from Councillors. Such an interesting and informative event.

The final submission is due November 2026.

## HIGHER EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT:

On going partnership working with higher education providers continues to support the promotion of Wirral's Heritage. Annual engagement with

the University of Liverpool and University of Lancashire, are planned for the future, showcasing key projects, share learning and strengthen relationships with future professionals entering the heritage, planning, regeneration and visitor economy sector.

#### WIRRAL HERITAGE OPEN DAYS:

Another great year of this event, put together, by Heritage Volunteers. We have received wonderful feedback about the great diversity of these events.

#### WIRRAL ARCHIVES; A PRICELESS ASSET FOR WIRRAL;

I have attended the Archives, on a number of occasions this year, including providing a Heritage Talk. It is nice to hear, the number of Councillor's visiting the facility, and a further invite has gone out just recently to Elected Members.

#### BIRKENHEAD PARK:

A number of Events going on here just recently, as we move forward with the application for World Heritage Site.

#### BIRKENHEAD TOWN HALL:

It has been reported that two of the clocks are not working. I have reported this to Officers.

#### 90<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY of UPTON LIBRARY;

More, great work by Library Staff and the Community with various historical endeavours.

#### COMMITTEE PRESENTATION WIRRAL ARCHAEOLOGY:

Members, commented, that this was one of the most significant Committee presentations in recent years, and, it was. Combining 3000 years of Wirral History. Further conversations are taking place for more partnership working with this amazing organisation and the infectious enthusiasm involved.



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## **Principal Heritage Officer**

### **Report to Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure**

**October 2026**

#### **Conservation:**

##### **Heritage Trails**

Our heritage trails require updating. We have commenced discussion on when we would be able to undertake the project. Further conversations are under way on how to promote them and where are best located in our website.

##### **War Memorials**

The war memorial officer post has been redundant. War memorial from now on will be cared by the heritage team. We are currently working on updating the list, the website, understanding who is responsible for maintenance and repairs and creating a GIS data.

##### **Towards Net Zero – Hamilton Square**

The collaboration with Historic England has come to an end as the reports had been approved. Work will continue on the draft of the energy efficiency guidance with the University of Liverpool for Wirral historic homes. It has been decided not to continue working with LLBCO for Hamilton Square Conservation Area. The majority of properties in the area are flats or businesses without permitted development rights; a LLBCO would therefore not meaningfully reduce planning burden for most owners and would not deliver the intended practical benefit. This conclusion balances regulatory complexity, limited scope for permitted-development gains, and the administrative cost of preparing an LLBCO.

##### **Local Listing Campaign**

The Wirral has a rich history with many historic assets of local interest and value that contribute positively to the character and identity of the area. These historic assets can be buildings, built structures, or landmarks. Once on the local list, the significance of assets is therefore recognised and can be afforded consideration in planning applications.

287 buildings/ structures have been initially approved for Local Listing. We are currently drafting the article 4 directions for the different assets and expect to go to public consultation later this year.

### **Clifton Park Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**

Work is progressing on the Clifton Park Conservation Area and Management Plan. The public consultation closed on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2026. Members of the public were able to complete the survey in Have your Say Wirral. We are currently going through the comments received.

### **Port Sunlight Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**

We are working together with Port Sunlight Village Trust and the University of Liverpool to create a new Appraisal and Management Plan for the conservation area.

### **Oxton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan**

We are collaborating together with the Oxton Society and the consultant to update the Oxton Village Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. The project has commenced in July.

### **Noctorum Ridge Conservation Area (New)**

The public consultation for the new conservation area ended the 16<sup>th</sup> of July. We have received more than 80 responses. Many suggestions were received for the extension of the boundary so we intend to go out to a second phase of public consultation which will commence the 1<sup>st</sup> of September.

### **Continued collaboration with the University of Liverpool**

Last year we allocated 20 students from the University of Liverpool in different heritage projects for them to gather experience in the heritage sector, this year we allocated 12. The student placement ended in May 2026, however some of the students are still working as heritage volunteers on diverse heritage projects.



## **TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE**

**Thursday 22 October**

|                      |                                                                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>REPORT TITLE:</b> | <b>TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE<br/>WORK PROGRAMME</b>     |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b>    | <b>CHAIR OF TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND<br/>LEISURE COMMITTEE</b> |

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee, in conjunction with the other Policy and Service Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

It is envisaged that the work programme will be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to note and comment on the proposed Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee work programme.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 A number of workplan formats were explored, with the current framework open to amendment to match the requirements of the Committee.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The work programme should align with the priorities of the Council and its partners. The programme will be informed by:

- The Council Plan
- The Council's transformation programme
- The Council's Forward Plan
- Service performance information
- Risk management information
- Public or service user feedback
- Referrals from Council

### **3.2 Terms of reference**

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee has responsibility for customer contact, community development and community services, including all of those functions related to community safety and also those regarding the promotion of community engagement. The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for the Council's role and functions:-

- a. for customer and community contact services, including various offices and meeting points, customer contact centres and advice and transaction services
- b. community engagement, incorporating the Council's approach to equalities, inclusion communities, neighbourhoods and the voluntary and charitable sector, community wealth building and social value;
- c. in considering options and develop proposals for neighbourhood arrangements, including capacity building, use of assets and devolving powers and services to neighbourhoods;
- d. for the provision and management of leisure, sports and recreation facilities;

- e. for delivery of the authority's library and museums services, including but not limited to art galleries, historic buildings and their gardens and the functions of the Council regarding public records, and the Council's
- f. concerning tourism, the arts, culture and heritage, including provision of theatre, entertainments, conferences and events;
- g. in relation to bereavement services and support to the Coroner's service;
- h. regarding community safety, crime and disorder and all associated matters;
- i. for trading standards and environmental health, including but not limited to:
  - consumer protection;
  - product safety;
  - fair trading;
  - metrology;
  - food standards and animal health;
  - air pollution control;
  - health and safety at work (except in so far as it relates to the Council as an employer);
  - public conveniences
  - food safety; and
  - control of nuisances;
- j. in respect of emergency planning and community resilience (community, regulatory and asset services);
- k. providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and
- l. undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.
- m. in respect of the Police and Justice Act 2006, the functions to:

- review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions; and
- make reports or recommendations to the local authority with respect to the discharge of those functions

## **Overview and Scrutiny**

The Committee's role includes an overview scrutiny approach to its responsibilities which shall be conducted in accordance with the overview and scrutiny means of working set out at Part 4(4)(B) of this Constitution. As part of its work programming the Committee shall consider:

- a. Overview and Policy Development -The Committee may undertake enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisors and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations.
- b. Overview and Scrutiny – The Committee holds responsibility:
  - for scrutinising and reviewing decisions made or actions taken by the Authority in so far as they have an impact on the role or functions of the Committee, its policies, budget and service delivery;
  - for the overview and scrutiny of external organisations whose services or activities affect the Borough of Wirral or any of its inhabitants where this does not fall within the role or remit of another service Committee or where it relates to cross cutting issues; and
  - for those overview and scrutiny functions in respect of crime and disorder as set out in paragraph 6.4(m) above which are to include the establishment and
  - functioning of joint arrangements as set out at paragraph 15 of this Section
- c. Stakeholder Engagement - The Committee may invite stakeholders to address the committee on issues of local concern and/or answer questions in so far as it impacts directly or indirectly on the role of functions of the committee.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 This report is for information and planning purposes only, therefore there are no direct financial implication arising. However, there may be financial implications arising as a result of work programme items.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, there may be legal implications arising as a result of work programme items.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 There are no direct implications to Staffing, ICT or Assets.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 The Committee's ability to undertake its responsibility to provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, make decisions on policies, co-ordinate spend, and maintain a strategic overview of outcomes, performance, risk management and budgets may be compromised if it does not have the opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

#### **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Not applicable.

#### **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

This report is for information to Members and there are no direct equality implications.

#### **10.0 ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct environment and climate implications.

#### **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct community wealth implications.

#### **12.0 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct crime and disorder implications.

**REPORT AUTHOR: Michelle Booth**  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
telephone: 0151 691 8546  
email: michellebooth@wirral.gov.uk

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee Work Programme

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Wirral Council Constitution

Forward Plan

The Council's transformation programme

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

| <b>Council Meeting</b> | <b>Date</b> |
|------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Standing item.</b>  |             |



## TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

### WORK PROGRAMME 2026/27

Contact Officer: Michelle Booth

### DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN BETWEEN JUNE 2026 TO MARCH 2027

| Item                                                                 | Key Decision | Date          | Lead Officer                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> October                                             |              |               |                                                                  |
| Update Regarding The Work Of The Council's Trading Standards Service | No           | October 2026  | Interim Director of Operations                                   |
| Library Strategy 2026 - 2031                                         | Yes          | October 2026  | Assistant Director – Leisure, Libraries and Community Engagement |
| Heritage Champion Update                                             | No           | October 2026  | Member Champion for Heritage                                     |
| Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area Annual Report                      | No           | October 2026  | Director of Corporate Services                                   |
| Economic Growth Strategy - Visitor Economy and Culture               | No           | October 2026  | Assistant Director<br>Chief Regeneration Officer                 |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> November 2026                                       |              |               |                                                                  |
| Annual Air Quality (ASR) update and Air Quality Strategy             | No           | November 2026 | Air Quality Manager / Senior Manager Environmental Health        |
| Environmental Health Update                                          | No           | November 2026 | Environmental Health Senior Manager                              |
| Heritage Champion update report                                      | No           | November 2026 | Member Champion for Heritage                                     |
| Q2 Budget Monitoring                                                 | No           | November 2026 | Head of Finance – Place                                          |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> January 2027                                        |              |               |                                                                  |
| Heritage Champion update report                                      | No           | January 2027  | Member Champion for Heritage                                     |
| Sports & Physical Activity Strategy 2027 – 2031                      | TBC          | January 2027  | Assistant Director – Leisure Libraries and                       |

|                                                            |     |              |                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------|--------------------------------------------------|
|                                                            |     |              | Customer Engagement                              |
| Wirral Visitor Economy Performance and Activity Update     | No  | January 2027 | Assistant Director<br>Chief Regeneration Officer |
| Community Safety Strategy                                  | Yes | January 2027 | Head of Community Safety                         |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2027                                 |     |              |                                                  |
| Third Sector Report                                        | No  | March 2027   | Director of Public Health                        |
| Heritage Champion update report                            | No  | March 2027   | Member Champion for Heritage                     |
| Q3 Budget Monitoring                                       | No  | March 2027   | Head of Finance – Place                          |
| Review of Community Led Bonfire And Firework Events Policy | No  | March 2027   | Head of Community Safety                         |

#### **ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS – WAITING TO BE SCHEDULED**

| <b>Item</b>                                       | <b>Brief description</b> | <b>Approximate timescale</b> | <b>Lead Officer</b>                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enabling the Open - Hoylake Municipal golf course |                          | 2026                         | Assistant Director<br>Property and Investment                     |
| Service Asset Management Plan                     |                          | 2026                         | Assistant Director<br>Property and Investment                     |
| Target Operating Model for Leisure Services       |                          | 2026/27                      | Assistant Director –<br>Leisure Libraries and Customer Engagement |

#### **STANDING ITEMS AND MONITORING REPORTS**

| Item                                                                 | Reporting Frequency | Lead Departmental Officer                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Financial Monitoring                                                 | Quarterly           | Head of Finance - Place                                          |
| Council Plan Performance                                             | Quarterly           | Director of Operations                                           |
| Performance reports (Community Safety)                               | Annually (June 27)  | Head of Community Safety                                         |
| Annual Community Safety Report                                       | Annually (June 27)  | Head of Community Safety                                         |
| Performance reports (Leisure/Libraries/Museums)                      | Annually (July)     | Assistant Director – Leisure, Libraries and Community Engagement |
| Annual Air Quality (ASR) update and Air Quality Strategy             | Annually (November) | Air Quality Manager / Senior Manager Environmental Health        |
| Third Sector Report                                                  | Annually (March)    | Director of Public Health                                        |
| Heritage Champion – Update Report                                    | Every meeting       | Member Champion for Heritage                                     |
| Update Regarding The Work Of The Council's Trading Standards Service | Annually (October)  | Director of Operations                                           |
| Review of Community Led Bonfire And Firework Events Policy           | Annually (March)    | Head of Community Safety                                         |

## WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE COMMITTEE

| Item                                        | Format        | Timescale  | Lead Officer                                                   | Progress |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Working Groups/Sub-Committees</b>        |               |            |                                                                |          |
| <b>Referral From Council</b>                |               |            |                                                                |          |
| <b>Spotlight sessions / workshops</b>       |               |            |                                                                |          |
| Budget Oversight Panel                      | Workshop      | Bi-monthly | Head of Finance – Place                                        | Ongoing  |
| Target Operating Model for Leisure Services | Workshop      | 2026/27    | Assistant Director – Leisure Libraries and Customer Engagement | Ongoing  |
| <b>Briefing notes</b>                       |               |            |                                                                |          |
| Environment Health                          | Briefing Note | 2026       | Senior Manager Environmental Health                            |          |

| Policy Development |                    |  |                                                          |  |
|--------------------|--------------------|--|----------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Literacy Strategy  | Policy Development |  | Asst Director Leisure, Libraries and Customer Engagement |  |

**Schedule of meetings:**

18 June 2026  
21 July 2026  
23 September 2026  
22 October 2026  
26 November 2026  
26 January 2027  
4 March 2027

## **Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee – Terms of Reference**

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee has responsibility for customer contact, community development and community services, including all of those functions related to community safety and also those regarding the promotion of community engagement.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for the Council's role and functions:-

- (a) for customer and community contact services, including various offices and meeting points, customer contact centres and advice and transaction services
- (b) community engagement, incorporating the Council's approach to equalities, inclusion communities, neighbourhoods and the voluntary and charitable sector, community wealth building and social value;
- (c) in considering options and develop proposals for neighbourhood arrangements, including capacity building, use of assets and devolving powers and services to neighbourhoods;
- (d) for the provision and management of leisure, sports and recreation facilities;
- (e) for delivery of the authority's library and museums services, including but not limited to art galleries, historic buildings and their gardens and the functions of the Council regarding public records, and the Council's
- (f) concerning tourism, the arts, culture and heritage, including provision of theatre, entertainments, conferences and events;
- (g) in relation to bereavement services and support to the Coroner's service;
- (h) regarding community safety, crime and disorder and all associated matters;
- (i) for trading standards and environmental health, including but not limited to:
  - (i) consumer protection;
  - (ii) product safety;
  - (iii) fair trading;
  - (iv) metrology;
  - (v) food standards and animal health;
  - (vi) air pollution control;
  - (vii) health and safety at work (except in so far as it relates to the Council as an employer);
  - (viii) public conveniences;
  - (ix) food safety; and
  - (x) control of nuisances;
- (j) in respect of emergency planning and community resilience (community, regulatory and asset services);
- (k) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and
- (l) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.
- m) in respect of the Police and Justice Act 2006, the functions to:

- (i) review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions; and
- (ii) make reports or recommendations to the local authority with respect to the discharge of those functions