

My Ref: Min2512/520

Your Ref: -

Date: 28th January 2026



NORTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Town Hall, Windmill Lane, Northam EX39 1BY

Town Clerk & RFO: Guy Langton (CiLCA, PSLCC)

Telephone: 01237 474976

admin@northamtowncouncil.gov.uk

www.northamtowncouncil.gov.uk

Mr Simon Kitchen
Devon County Council
County Hall, Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QD

Re: DCC/Libraries Unlimited Consultation – Effect on Northam Libraries

Dear Simon,

It was resolved at the Full Council meeting of Northam Town Council on 17th December 2025 to write to you with our serious concerns about the Devon County Council/Libraries Unlimited consultation currently underway, and in particular the proposal to reduce the opening hours of Northam Library from 21 hours per week to just six.

Northam Library is a well-used and highly valued public facility. On the four days per week it currently opens (two full days and two half days), it supports a wide range of community activity. Regular sessions such as Bounce and Rhyme, author events, Knitter Natter, and other community-led groups rely on the library as a venue. The library also provides safe, inclusive space and access to professional librarians for residents of all ages. Its social and educational value to the community is substantial, it is a valuable social amenity for young and old, supported by those professional librarians.

The Town Council recognises the need for financial restraint. However, the proposed reduction affecting Northam appears disproportionately severe. Devon County Council has stated that it aims to retain '70.63% of the current hours' across the network, yet Northam would face a 71.43% **reduction** if the proposal is taken forward - a complete reversal of the stated objective. This disparity is alarming and deeply concerning.



Lords of the Manor



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Population data further reinforces the inconsistency. Northam and Westward Ho! together have a population of approximately 8,600 (Torridge District Council, 2023). Appledore adds a further 3,700 residents and has its own smaller library. By comparison, Torrington has approximately 5,800 residents, and Holsworthy 3,500–4,000, yet both are proposed to be placed in Band C, retaining 15 hours of staffed library provision.

Under the current proposal, Northam would be placed in Band D (the same category as Appledore library), despite Northam serving a much larger population. The smaller towns of Torrington and Holsworthy go into Band C and retain 15 hours of staffed library provision. This raises significant concerns about the methodology used to determine the banding allocations. From the data available, the criteria appear inconsistent and the outcome disproportionate.

Northam Town Council therefore requests clarification on the methodology and criteria used in the evaluation process, and how such an extensive reduction to Northam's service provision has been justified.

In conclusion, the Town Council urges Devon County Council to:

1. Reconsider the proposed banding structure.
2. Confirm that the population of Westward Ho! has been fully accounted for in all calculations relating to Northam Library's service level.
3. Re-designate Northam Library as a Band C library, with a minimum of 15 staffed hours, in line with comparable towns and give the whole Northam Town Council area the library provision it so desperately needs.

Northam, Westward Ho!, and the wider Town Council area rely heavily on this essential facility, and the community deserves equitable and sustainable access to library services.

Yours sincerely



Guy Langton –Town Clerk & RFO,
On behalf of Northam Town Council

Copied:

Jason Allen, Strategic Lead, Devon County Council jason.allen@devon.gov.uk
Cllr Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs cheryl.cottle-hunkin@devon.gov.uk