SERVICE ASSESSMENT

Name of Service	Library Services
Type of Service	Discretionary
Service Details	Council provides library services to the community across a spread of seven days at five locations across the City, with an aggregated annual average of approximately 650,000 visitors. Library branches circulate/issue nearly 940,000 items annually including a mixture of both staff-assisted and self-service loans. Library branches also facilitate an average of around 250 public internet bookings daily.
Actions Taken to Date	To date we have undertaken these immediate interim measures, pending Council's endorsement, to mitigate transmission: • Suspended all public programs and activities, including story times • Home visits/outreach services currently are on hold • Book clubs and the weekly homework group are no longer meeting in library spaces • Holiday program and other group activities have been suspended Information for both staff and the public around hygiene, safe distancing and other protective measures has been made widely available. Additional daily cleaning measures around vulnerable areas such as public internet keyboards and mice, self-service kiosks etc. Regular exchange of information across the public library sector and regular updates for staff within the library service.
Reason for Review	This review is suggested as necessary to assess the risks around potential COVID-19 transmission/exposure for the public and staff. Libraries are high-people volume community spaces with people often congregating in close proximity. This triggers an assessment under the DHHS recommendations and mass gatherings advice. While Public Libraries Victoria - the Statewide peak body for public libraries – has made no specific recommendation in relation to service closures, it has issued a public statement including: "*Public libraries provide a vital community service across Victoria and we know that, during difficult times, many people turn to their local library for support and a sense of community. However, in light of the spread of COVID-19, some of our library branches have elected to close or cancel programs and events, in order to reduce the risk to library users and staff.*"

	Virtually all public libraries across the State have suspended public programs and events, outreach or mobile service deliveries.
	As of Tuesday 17 March, increasing numbers of metropolitan (and some regional) library services have elected to close branches to the public until further notice.
	This list is rapidly expanding, and currently includes: Melbourne Library Service, Moreland, Maribyrnong, Wyndham, Moonee Valley, Mornington, State Library of Victoria, Ballarat Library Service and Macedon Ranges.
Risk Assessment	Approximately 2,000 community members physically access Port Phillip library branches every day. In addition, between 2,500-3,000 items circulate daily. This necessitates high levels of unavoidable physical handling of books and surfaces like keyboards and touch screens by both staff and members of the public. Across all branches people (staff and public) are often working at close quarters such as at service desks, study areas and around public internets, i.e. less than 1-1.5 metres apart.
	A high proportion of regular library visitors includes members of the community who have been identified as being particularly vulnerable or at high risk, including young children and family members, older people, home library service clients and people experiencing homelessness.
	There is a relatively high likelihood that the longer libraries remain open in our current form that we increase the risk of staff and or community member exposure to or transmission of COVID-19.
Community Assessment	There is a clear impact for the broader community in the potential loss of physical access to public spaces like library branches if the service were to close for a period. There is also a particular impact on some vulnerable groups who use the library for shelter in the daytime and a point of social contact for people who are isolated. Closing the libraries at a time where many people might be in self isolation, might be particularly impactful as people may be looking for books, films etc more than usual.

Economic Assessment	It is difficult at this stage to identify any clear economic impact of either reducing or closing the service for a potentially extended period. Library visits do generate some local economic activity at cafes, and shops.
Options	**Option 1 – Business as Usual** Service remains open in its current configuration, i.e. provision of 'core' services only, no programs, outreach etc. This is considered high risk not the recommended option. **Option 2 – Partial Closure** As St Kilda library is the highest potential risk site in terms of volume and size of the building, a transitional option could include initial closure of the main St Kilda branch, with it remaining as the central staff admin and support hub, while offering a scaled-back level of service at the other four branches, potentially with a reduced spread of opening hours (e.g. 6pm weekday evening closures and reduced weekend hours). This is a possible short-term response, but the same inherent risks for staff and community apply in terms of busy public buildings and high volumes of material handling and exposed surfaces. **Option 3 – Close All Branches Immediately** The recommended option is to immediately close all branches to help mitigate the risks of exposure and reduce the likelihood of resourcing impacts from staff infection. This would be communicated through established channels via CoPP and library websites, social media channels, through email lists and physical notices at branches and across Town Halls. If this option is approved, there are a range of potential avenues to continue to provide access to resources/information services for the community. This could include providing a reconfigured and increased home service (with risk management measures in place such as material drop off and collection), alongside offering continued access to the extensive resource base of digital, and online services such as e-books, streaming services and downloadable content that can be provided remotely. A summary of potential community-facing and operational alternatives includes to ameliorate the loss of services are being explored. Some of these can be immediately implemented while others will require some development work: - Community • Reservation pick-up points (outside libraries or at supermarkets (Click and Collect) • Video/streaming children's story time / baby rhyme time via website or YouTube • Telephone service to support members to access online services including e-books and audio books (Ring a Librarian)

	- Drop and go for home library service - Encourage public access to our libraries digital collections - Ask borrowers to increase numbers of items borrowed (to help reduce visitation) - Open external returns chutes enabling 24/7 access - Remove borrowing restrictions on people who have overdue items (so they are not tempted to return items when they are unwell) Operational - Collection management and admin - Project workgroups – Rostering and RFID deployment - St Kilda library workroom project - Database clean-ups - Options for some staff groups to potentially work from home
Legal Liability / Obligations to Contractors or External Funders	There are currently no legislative, contractual or funding-related issues requiring consideration.
Budget Impact	There are no significant or immediate budgetary impacts if the recommended option is actioned.