

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

23 February 2021

Item 6 – Public Participation

From Elizabeth Threlfall

**To Councillor Ian Blair-Pilling, Cabinet Member for IT, Digitalisation,
Operational Assets, Leisure and Libraries**

Question (P21-09)

How has Wiltshire Council's library service adapted over the past year to covid and what has been done to support people who need to use the libraries to access computers to be able to apply for benefits?

Response

We quickly developed new ways of operating to ensure access to vital services. We implemented socially distanced browsing, order and collect from entrances during lockdowns, a non-contact home delivery service for the most vulnerable and bookable computers to support those without access to the internet.

We've worked with Citizen's Advice Wiltshire and Job Centre Plus, to promote public computer access to those most in need. We've supported over 6,500 computer sessions since August 2020; included residents wanting to print school meal vouchers.

We increased our digital offer, with over 2,000 new eBooks, eAudio and eMagazines. We launched a YouTube channel to complement our Facebook pages, ensuring those who were socially isolated, home schooling or struggling with mental health issues have access to activities and reading material. We are running online rhymetimes, author talks and reading groups. These have received over 170,000 views.

2,257 residents have become library members during the pandemic by joining online.

We are continuing to support our communities and innovate to ensure they can access vital services and information. We'll soon be launching support to help residents complete the census online.