

Hi Mel,

In answer to the TTC members question: *With the libraries having been closed for at least the first quarter of the financial year 2020/21, and only a reduced service being provided through a controlled reopening plan, please could you advise whether West Berkshire Council will be requesting, and supporting, pro-rata contributions, that reflect this reduction in service provision.*

West Berkshire Council is not asking for reduced/pro rata contributions in this financial year. The cost of the service has been the same throughout the pandemic and therefore the annual shortfall in budget, that we hope to make up through voluntary contributions from town and parish councils, remains the same. While the library branches were closed staff were working, including training and putting in place the operational procedures for the new Order & Collect service; the online e-library use increased by 180% on the same period last year; we launched a number of new online initiatives for readers of all ages including the popular online storytime events for children; buildings were deep cleaned and routine maintenance to buildings and systems was carried out; we completed the installation of new public PCs in all libraries and put in place public protection equipment (including screens on reception desks). It's been a very busy period for the library service with the aim of restoring as much service as safely and as quickly as possible. The staff have been fantastic and as a result we are further ahead in our recovery plans than many other library authorities.

I hope that answers your question. Do let me know if you require any further information.

With best wishes,

Paul

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