

**Shaping our future
East Renfrewshire Council Budget proposals 2015 -18
Response to consultation on proposals**

1. Who we are

1.1 CILIP in Scotland (CILIPS) is the Scottish arm of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, the leading professional body for librarians, information specialists and knowledge managers. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the proposals contained in the above consultation document which sets out a range of measures aimed at meeting an estimated budget shortfall of c.£20million.

2. Introduction

2.1 Many of our members are employed in local authority and school library services and likely to be affected by these proposals if implemented. CILIPS recognises and understands the very difficult choices being faced by Councils as a result of significant financial pressures. We address our response to those proposals affecting library services and ask that consideration is given to what will be lost before any final decision is taken.

2.2 Recent researchⁱ evidence suggests that professionally delivered, high quality and relevant library services are essential to the well being of individuals and communities. Findings include a strong link between library services and education, digital participation, access to information, promotion of literacy and social inclusion. At a recent British Council summit Culture Minister, Fiona Hyslop, stated that libraries are key partners in the delivery of the Scottish Government's ambitions for digital participation.ⁱⁱ The library services at risk in these proposals play a valuable role in supporting learning, promoting economic wellbeing and serving as cultural centres.

2.3 There are three aspects of the document which relate to cuts and/or changes to library services:

- School librarian service
- Public library service; and
- Transferring the library service to an arm's length trust

3. School librarian service

3.1 The proposal suggests replacing the full time librarian with a part time resource; introducing 'self service' into the school library and utilising senior pupils on a voluntary basis to support the running of the library.

- 3.2 Curriculum for Excellence is the policy framework deployed in schools and teaching colleagues clearly recognise and appreciate that the availability of access to the expertise of full time professional school librarians contributes to its successful delivery.ⁱⁱⁱ The role of school librarians in supporting learning and the Literacy Action Plan is confirmed by research evidence and well documented.^{iv} CILIPS therefore holds that the concept of 'literacy across the curriculum' is best supported by access to information in a wide range of formats, and a trained information professional who works in partnership with teaching staff in schools^v
- 3.3 School librarians are information specialists with knowledge of learning styles, best routes to find information, information literacy and transferable skills. Given their professional role, it's difficult to see how a qualified graduate professional could be replaced by a 'senior pupil' and deliver the same service. There is a need for a clear statement from the Council on the legal position of senior pupils in a supervisory role in terms of health and safety, disclosure etc.
- 3.4 The proposal provides no detail as to whether and how the valuable out of hours services provided by professional school librarians would remain supported e.g. homework clubs, reading clubs and IT provision for those with no internet access at home. Is this to be retained or replaced by senior pupils too?
- 3.5 No definition is offered as to what is meant by the term 'self service'. Does this refer to the use of automated issue and returns technology or to an unstaffed library?
- 3.6 CILIPS maintains that school libraries are valuable for their ability to support teaching and learning and should be the central resource of the school, open every day and staffed by a professionally trained librarian. We therefore urge you to consider alternatives to a part time professional library service for schools.

4. Public library service

- 4.1 It is proposed that financial savings can be made by co-location, self service, changes to opening hours and 'working with community volunteers to operate a library service'. The Scottish Government's own research^{vi} cites the fact that almost three quarters of adults participate in cultural activity, the most popular being reading for pleasure. Research published in 2012 by the Carnegie Trust^{vii} confirmed that library use in Scotland is the highest in the UK and that they are valued as community assets.
- 4.2 However, CILIPS contends that the cultural aspect of a public library service is only one facet of their contribution to community and individual well being. Professionally run library services support local communities in accessing information and informal learning opportunities such as ICT classes, book groups, family history research, bibliotherapy, literacy support, informed citizenship, events and activities. They provide supported and free access to IT and online services for those who might otherwise be excluded from these services and are key partners in realising the Scottish Government's ambitions for digital participation.^{viii} The Carnegie Trust research also cites qualified staff as a key strength in delivering the public library offer.

4.3 CILIPS believes there is a role for volunteers in libraries where they are used to complement and enrich services. However we do not support the use of volunteers to replace paid professional and support roles to save money. Your proposals give no detail on how regular opening hours will be maintained using volunteers or indeed, whether those volunteers will be placed under the management and direction of a professional member of staff. We are therefore concerned there may be a lack of connectivity in terms of legal duties such as health and safety, risk assessment, disclosure, data protection etc.

5. **Transferring the public library service to a culture and leisure trust**

5.1 CILIPS recognises that moving to a trust can help improve cost effectiveness by realising tax savings but we also hold that trusts must be well run and have appropriate accountability measures in place. We would seek assurance that a move to a trust will:

- Promote the important contribution of libraries to the creation of strong and healthy communities;
- Ensure that information and library services remain core to what the local authority does;
- Maintain current levels of service provision and professional library staff posts; and
- Establish robust accountability measures to make certain that the activity of the trust remains open to public scrutiny.

ⁱ <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/250ba850-1bca-4038-8bc3-070f20ef23d2/Speaking-Volumes.aspx>

ⁱⁱ <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Libraries-at-heart-of-digital-inclusion-12c2.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ (<http://www.scotsman.com/news/dani-garavelli-school-cuts-are-no-laughing-matter-1-3606421>)ⁱⁱⁱ

^{iv} http://www.scottishlibraries.org/storage/sectors/schools/SLIC_RGU_Impact_of_School_Libraries_2013.pdf

^v http://www.scottishlibraries.org/storage/sectors/schools/SLIC_RGU_Impact_of_School_Libraries_2013.pdf

^{vi} <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/16002>

^{vii} <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2012/a-new-chapter>

^{viii} www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/04/6821/0