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Roddie Mackay - Council Leader

Council Offices

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Dear Councillor Mackay,

I am writing to you from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) in relation to the current public engagement on changes to library services in your area.

CILIPS is the professional body for library and information professionals. We hold that a good public library service is essential to the well-being of communities, providing a positive experience for local people and demonstrating the value a local authority places on its community, and would like to seek more clarification on what is intended by the 'community hubs' model linking libraries to schools. I would appreciate it if someone could answer the following questions:

1. Can you please provide further details on exactly what is meant by the intention to operate community hubs – would these be delivered by paid and trained library staff or volunteers?
2. Can you also please provide some clarity on what would the smaller, more discrete mobile service would provide specifically and the areas it would cover?
3. What assessments have been carried out to measure the impact on disadvantaged groups and their ability to access libraries via the redesigned service?

If the intention is to hand over publicly run library services to management by local communities, then we would be deeply concerned at this proposal. CILIPS is opposed to job substitution where paid professional and support roles are directly replaced with volunteers to save money as well as raising a number of data protection issues. If this happens services suffer and will be unsustainable. What remains would be a library service unable to serve the community comprehensively, support people's information needs or provide everyone with the opportunity for learning and development. I understand that community-run libraries have already been attempted locally unsuccessfully.

In addition, the mobile library provides access to library and information services, including literature, culture and knowledge to all residents. The Local Government Act sets out a duty to secure the provision of adequate library facilities for all residents in the area and I would stress a mobile library service is an essential part of

this. Additionally, the Equalities Act aims to ensure that any decisions do not impact disadvantaged members of the community.

Libraries are visited by more people than attend the cinema and professional football matches and offer an incredible return on investment as highlighted by the National Strategy for Public Libraries, Ambition and Opportunityⁱ. Libraries tackle social isolationⁱⁱ and support mental health and wellbeingⁱⁱⁱ as evidenced by the Scottish Government. Libraries also play a key role in supporting the current digital strategies in Scotland^{iv} and across the UK by providing free access for people unable to get online at home. Studies have shown that around a quarter of Scotland's adults have issues with literacy^v and libraries tackle this by providing adult learning and promoting access to reading at a community level.

We acknowledge the difficult times that we live in, but now more than ever, high quality library and information services are vital to people's lives, and local communities, learners, workers and businesses need the support of a trained and skilled workforce to thrive. I look forward to receiving a response to the above questions and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the matter further.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara

Acting Director

CILIP in Scotland

ⁱ <https://scottishlibraries.org/media/1133/ambition-opportunity-scotlands-national-public-library-strategy.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/connected-scotland-tackling-social-isolation-loneliness-building-stronger-communities/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/making-easier-health-literacy-action-plan-scotland-2017-2025/pages/6/>

^{iv} <https://www.gov.scot/publications/realising-scotlands-full-potential-digital-world-digital-strategy-scotland/>

^v <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/339854/0112382.pdf>