

10th May 2021



Robertson House, 152 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 4TB

email: admin@cilips.org.uk

Dear Glasgow City Councillors,

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (www.cilips.org.uk) is the affiliate body of CILIP, the leading professional body for librarians in the UK. Many of our members work in a wide variety of roles across the nation's 32 public library services.

Last year, we wrote to Glasgow Life highlighting the importance of getting library services up and running after the pandemic, and we note and welcome the recent reopening plans. However, we are now writing to raise our concerns at the plans to not re-open or find alternative arrangements for several of Glasgow's major libraries. We are writing this letter to Glasgow City Council as ultimately it is the Council's legal responsibility to provide a library service that meets the needs of the people in the local authority.

We understand that financial pressures are huge, and we do not believe that how library services are delivered can never be reviewed. However, it is essential that a full public consultation is held before making changes this significant. Co-located or moved services can work but often do not provide an equitable service as before. It is vitally important that the impact of closures or relocations is assessed fully, public are consulted, and detailed evidence is provided to justify the public's money being spent in a different way, including how much it may fully cost to relocate services.

For example, plans to move the library at Whiteinch to Scotstoun may not be satisfactory for the community and will be too far for some users to travel. The closure of the Couper Institute will leave a large area of the Southside with no easy access to a library, especially with delayed openings in Langside and Pollokshields. Not reopening Goma could leave Glasgow potentially unique in not having a public library in the city centre. All the other library buildings marked for closure serve large communities who will really miss them, as extensive protests have shown, and it is vital that Equalities legislation has been considered if vulnerable people may have to travel further to access vital services, particularly during a pandemic.

The benefits that well-staffed libraries provide both economically and otherwise to Scottish society far outweigh what they cost to run. Libraries provide vital digital skills and access for all, playing a key role in combating digital exclusion, and evidence shows that they also contribute to improving literacy levels, supporting mental health and reducing social isolation: benefits that will be in huge demand as our nation recovers from the pandemic's protracted impact.

As you will know, having dedicated library buildings that are easily accessed by the whole community was always and continues to be essential. We ask that you look closely at the closure of these buildings and the plans to re-locate services and agree to undertake some more in-depth public consultation, ensuring that the services you are planning to make significant changes to will still meet the needs of your communities.

Yours Faithfully,

Sean McNamara

Head of CILIP Scotland