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Dear North Ayrshire Council,

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) is the leading professional body for librarians in Scotland and our members work in services across all of Scotland, including North Ayrshire. We write this letter as a general response to your current consultation over changes to library services. This includes proposals to develop services in line with a Locality Hub model, including co-locating library services with other community related council services.

Firstly, it is important to note that we completely understand that you are facing financial challenges, as all local authorities are, and are required to make difficult choices and we welcome that you are undertaking community consultation before doing so.

We believe co-location or reduction of current library buildings should only be attempted if you can ensure that people's ability to access services is affected as little as possible and that no library users are disadvantaged by any decisions made. There are successful examples of co-locations but also others that have seen library services diminished, and we would ask that you ensure the former is the ambition here. In any changes made we would ask that libraries are still staffed by trained library workers. The impact of this is crucial - evidence compiled by IFLA (the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) shows that an increase of 10 library workers per 100,000 population equates to an increase of an extra 1000 people reading[i].

As you know, studies have shown that around a quarter of Scotland's adults have issues with literacy[ii] and libraries tackle this by providing adult learning and promoting access to reading at a community level. They tackle social isolation[iii] and support mental health and wellbeing[iv] as evidenced by the Scottish Government. Libraries also play a key role in supporting the current digital strategies in Scotland[v] and alleviate data poverty[vi] by providing free access for people unable to get online at home, delivering substantial social and economic benefits to citizens and communities. A physical and adequate building with skilled staff, easily accessible by the community is essential to all the above.

We would be concerned over any plans that may be put in place to ask the local community to take on the running of any library, as we understand may be the case for at least one library. This is something that has been deeply flawed as a delivery model across the UK and it is essential that all libraries are still supported and managed by staff with professional expertise in libraries as much as possible. We hope this would be the case in your authority.

Overall, we believe that any decisions to relocate, co-locate or close libraries must be based on community needs and evidence from the consultation and should ensure that your talented

workforce can continue to deliver life changing services. We also urge you to ensure the impact on equalities has been fully evaluated.

An appropriately staffed and resourced public library service, open and available at the times people need it demonstrates the value a local authority places on its community whilst meeting the requirements of the Local Government Act. I would hope that you can take the above information into consideration and appreciate being given the opportunity to respond.

Yours Sincerely

Sean McNamara

Head of CILIP in Scotland

[i] https://blogs.ifla.org/lpa/2021/01/02/library-stat-of-the-week-50-part-2-where-there-are-stronger-and-better-used-public-and-community-libraries-more-people-read-more-often/

[ii] https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/339854/0112382.pdf

[iii] https://www.gov.scot/publications/connected-scotland-tackling-social-isolation-loneliness-building-stronger-communities/

[iv] https://www.gov.scot/publications/making-easier-health-literacy-action-plan-scotland-2017-2025/pages/6/

[v] https://www.gov.scot/publications/realising-scotlands-full-potential-digital-world-digital-strategy-scotland/

[vi] https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/01-FS_NEST_DPENG_Book.pdf