

14th July 2021



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

email: sean.mcnamara@cilips.org.uk

Dear Glasgow City Councillors,

I am writing to you from the professional body for library workers in Scotland (www.cilips.org.uk) in relation to the recent press reports on workforce reduction in addition to the continual lack of clear plans to reopen key libraries. The confirmation that Glasgow Life is intending to reduce its workforce by 500 (around 20%) further highlights the urgent need for action to remedy this dire situation affecting Scotland's largest library service.

Over a decade of cuts to services have already left Glasgow Life with regular deficits, reduced budgets and a workforce supported by many short-term and insecure contracts and this latest announcement provides additional stress for an already under pressure workforce, even if the reductions will be found through non-compulsory means.

It also throws into further doubt the ability for library services, which remain closed in key areas including the city centre and large parts of both the south and west of the city, to reopen and serve the communities who desperately need them. Communities need access to books, resources, and computers as well as the cost-free social connection libraries provide to users, reducing social isolation and improving health and wellbeing. Libraries also need skilled, appropriately paid staff that have built relationships with users over years - based on trust, listening and mutual respect as this is what makes libraries a vital and safe space for communities. Many of these libraries have proven to be safe to open and this needs to happen sooner rather than later.

Whilst we accept that the pandemic has caused huge damage to income generation within Glasgow Life, we would strongly challenge the fact that libraries were ever put in a position to rely on the generation of income from other sources such as leisure. Libraries are a statutory service, and it is the Council's legal responsibility to provide library services that meet the needs of their communities, something that is clearly not happening based on the recent protests.

This situation needs to be remedied as soon as possible. If Glasgow Life cannot open all its libraries and protect its skilled and dedicated workforce, then the Council must find a way to ensure they meet their responsibilities as a Council. Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Life and the Scottish Government must find a financial solution that ensures protection for jobs and that the services in Glasgow can continue to play the role of national significance that they do.

In many comparable cities across the UK, library services are recognised as being central to the cultural offer and are funded and prioritised accordingly. For Glasgow Libraries not to be treated the same way is hugely disappointing and will have a long-lasting impact on the city. Library workers and users are in desperate need of reassurance and support and should not be the subject of continued political stand offs.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean McNamara", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sean McNamara, Head of CILIP in Scotland

CC: Glasgow Life CEO, Scot Gov Minister for Culture