

18th October 2022

Inverclyde Council
Municipal Buildings
Greenock
PA15 1LY

Dear Council Leader (cc full Council)

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland ([CILIPS](https://www.cilips.org.uk)) is the leading professional body for librarians nationally. Many of our members work in services including those in your public and school libraries.

I am writing to raise concerns over the following current budget proposals:

- **Close the Greenock Central Library and deliver a small re-investment in other branches, including increased hours in South West Library and Inverkip Library.**
- **A service review of public and school libraries across Inverclyde to achieve joined-up thinking in how library services are provided, removing duplication and achieving efficiencies or delivering greater economies of scale where possible.**

We are pleased to note that you are carrying out consultation on these and we realise the local authority funding model means difficult decisions must be made.

However, we believe that the proposal to close Greenock Central Library would be deeply damaging to the local community. This would leave the Greenock town centre without an accessible and adequate branch, and this potentially would be a breach of your requirements based on both the Local Government Act and Equalities Law.

Libraries are essential in improving literacy, tackling [social isolation](#) and supporting [mental health and wellbeing](#), as evidenced by the Scottish Government. Libraries play a key role in supporting the current [digital strategies](#) in Scotland by providing free access for people unable to get online at home, delivering substantial democratic, social and economic benefits to citizens and communities as well as helping people search and apply for jobs and welfare. Greenock has areas of multiple deprivation and for Central Library to close it would be deeply harmful to the communities that rely on it.

Additionally, the changes we understand you propose making to the school library service will cut the number of school librarian posts at the level we believe is needed. This will de-professionalise the service you offer and directly affect the quality of education available.

Cutting staffing resources and valuing posts at non-professional levels runs counter to current national initiatives aiming to support and enhance literacy and will inevitably lead to a poorer overall educational experience. A [body of impact studies](#) highlight the contribution of school librarians to improved attainment and achievement. School libraries are a safe and supportive learning environment where all pupils have equal and equitable access to curriculum related learning resources, both physical and digital, practical support, and information for educational purposes. We believe that school libraries should be the central resource of the school, open every day and staffed by a professionally trained librarian.

The [National Strategy for Public Libraries](#), currently being implemented in Scotland, makes clear that 'school librarians are a fundamental part of Scotland's education sector and have the potential to be transformative in the development of every child and young person'. This document states on numerous occasions the important role school librarians have in educational settings and it is important that local authorities recognise this. A recent proposal by North Lanarkshire saw almost 40,000 people sign a [petition](#).

How much value a local authority attaches to its libraries can often be a good indication over how much it values its people. We ask that you do not take these savings when you agree the budget and we would be happy to discuss this matter further should you wish.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara, Head of CILIP Scotland