

17th November 2022

East Renfrewshire Council

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to you from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS), the affiliate body of CILIP, the leading professional body for librarians in the UK. Many of our members work in services including those in your school and public libraries and we are writing to provide our feedback on proposals relating to libraries.

Firstly, we welcome the fact that you are consulting on these proposals, and we recognise that local authority budgets are extremely challenging and that difficult decisions are required. However, we believe that the proposal to remove school librarian posts will severely damage the service you offer and directly affect the quality of education you offer pupils as well as efforts nationally to improve literacy rates and attainment.

An extensive, growing body of evidence highlights the contribution of school librarians to improved exam scores and achievement, and their role in creating a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment where all pupils have equal and equitable access to curriculum related learning resources.

The National Strategy for School Libraries, Vibrant Libraries, Thriving Schools, which is currently being implemented in Scotland, states on numerous occasions the important role school librarians have in educational settings. School librarians are trained and skilled members of school staff, and what they provide cannot be adequately replaced by using teachers, pupils or public library staff to support school library services.

An ongoing campaign against similar action by North Lanarkshire has had widespread support from all over Scotland, including from award winning authors Damian Barr, Kerry Hudson and Theresa Breslin O.B.E., as well as from Scottish Book Trust, The Daily Record and Scotland on Sunday. A petition to save the Council's school librarians has now reached 40,000 signatures.

You highlight that a priority for local residents is tackling climate change and we have gathered significant evidence showing that library professionals are essential to climate action, with school librarians creating and maintaining up-to-date environmental book collections, promoting climate literacy and local environmental consciousness, encouraging recycling and reduced plastic use, tackling misinformation and providing a reliable source of evidence-based information about the climate crisis that cannot be replicated for young people elsewhere.

The savings option 'Reduction in Devolved School Management Budgets involving other staff groups and budgets' under which the removal of school librarians is being considered would, even if implemented in its entirety, represent only 0.9% of East Renfrewshire's stated total expenditure for education whereas the long term impact would far outweigh this.

Specifically, in East Renfrewshire schools, your librarians have delivered the East Renfrewshire Teen Book Award to over 300 pupils, supported students with literacy and ESOL needs via reading interventions, run eco groups, arranged visits to book festivals and events, delivered evening literacy events and supported World Book Day. They have also carried out transition work with primary schools, curated class collections, supported or made funding bids and run mindfulness groups. This list could go on, as the East Renfrewshire school

librarians are an example of an outstanding and essential service, and most or all these activities would not happen without them.

We are also concerned about the proposal's mention of future changes being considered to East Renfrewshire's public libraries, where 'temporary or permanent closure of some facilities could be considered'. As demonstrated in our substantial collection of evidence banks, public libraries are essential to literacy, physical and mental wellbeing, reducing social isolation, tackling misinformation, promoting inclusivity, encouraging sustainability and supporting the local economy, and should be protected at all costs. For changes to be made it will be vital that more detailed consultation takes place with affected communities, so they fully understand the impact.

We ask that you take the above into account and we would be happy to discuss this matter further should you wish.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara, Head of CILIP Scotland