

9th March 2023



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

email: admin@cilips.org.uk

Aberdeen City Council
Marischal College Broad Street, Aberdeen
AB10 1AQ.

Dear Councillor

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland ([CILIPS](#)) is the leading professional body for librarians nationally. Many of our members work in services including those of your public libraries.

I am writing to raise concerns over your proposals to decommission six of your branches and would urge you to strongly reconsider this. Many people rely on these libraries, several of which are in deprived areas, and changes such as this should only be taken if detailed public consultations evidence that the closures and resulting loss of vital community services are what your community needs and wants.

I understand that some of the decisions have been based on usage figures and changing habits. However, evidence shows that when libraries are funded and supported, they are well used, with libraries having more visits than Scottish football and cinemas combined before the pandemic, and recent research has shown that numbers are returning significantly in 2022 and 2023. If any of these decisions are being made based on footfall affected by the pandemic or reduced hours during that spell, then that would be deeply unfair.

Aberdeen City already has one of the lowest numbers of branches per population (1.62 per 20,000) and well below the average of 2.04 per 20,000. **These changes could leave Aberdeen as having the lowest number of library branches per population in Scotland.**

Public libraries are essential in providing access to books, 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 to search and apply for jobs and welfare. Libraries have also been essential warm spaces during the current cost of living crisis.

There is a National Strategy for Public Libraries being implemented in Scotland that highlights their value to places, people, and partnerships, and all of these will suffer if libraries are removed from your communities.

It is your legal duty as a Council to provide services that meet the needs of your community, so any closures should only be undertaken with the support of residents. If changes mean that someone cannot access services in the same way then this could also infringe Equalities Law, so we would also ask that Equalities and Economic Impact Assessments are undertaken if they have not been already. To undertake no meaningful consultation may mean that you have not met your requirements as a Council, and we would ask that you review this urgently.

How much value a local authority attaches to its public libraries can often be a good indication of how much it values its people. We ask that you take these savings proposals no further and we would be happy to discuss this matter in greater detail should you wish.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sean McNamara', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Sean McNamara
Head of CILIP Scotland