

9th March 2023

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

email: admin@cilips.org.uk

West Dunbartonshire Council
16 Church Street, Dumbarton
G82 1QL

Dear Councillor

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 of your public and school libraries.

I am writing to raise concerns over the following current budget proposals that you recently agreed including:

1. Dalmuir public library to move to Dalmuir Community Centre.
2. Balloch, Parkhall and Duntocher libraries to possibly be relocated.
3. Review of library opening hours and restructure.
4. School library provision in several secondary schools to be reduced to 3 days per week.

For points 1-3, we would ask that these changes are only taken if detailed public consultation provides evidence showing they are what your community wants and needs, and that it would not affect anyone in your community accessing services that they rely on.

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.

It is your legal duty as a Council to provide library services that meet the needs of your community, so any changes to library locations or opening hours should 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 an Equalities Impact Assessment is undertaken if it has not been already.

Additionally, the changes you propose making to school libraries will strongly reduce the service you offer and directly affect the quality of education available. Like public libraries, school libraries can only meet the needs of pupils if they are run by a full-time, trained, and skilled school librarian.

Cutting school librarian hours 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](#) highlights the contribution of school librarians to improved attainment and achievement. School libraries are a safe and supportive learning environment where all pupils have equitable access to curriculum related learning resources, both physical and digital, as well as

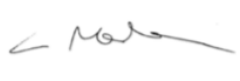
practical support and information for educational purposes. We believe that school libraries should be the central resource of the school, open every day and staffed by a professionally trained librarian.

The [National Strategy for School 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 emphasises on numerous occasions the important role that school librarians have in educational settings and it is important that local authorities recognise this.

A campaign in 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.](#)

How much value a local authority attaches to its public and school 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', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sean McNamara

Head of CILIP Scotland