

13th February 2024

Inverclyde Council
Municipal Buildings
Greenock
PA15 1LY

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 in your public libraries.

I am writing to raise concerns over the proposal to reduce opening hours by 25% in all your libraries. As I am not a local resident, I am unable to fill in the consultation form as it asks priorities to be set amongst other services. Therefore, I hope this letter can be considered.

Firstly, as outlined in the consultation, we fully recognise that to fund one service others need to be cut. The funding arrangements for local government are not sufficient to meet the needs of vital services and we have written to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance to make this clear, and we know this has been made more difficult with a freeze on Council Tax. Despite this, I hope you can understand the damage cuts to opening hours will do to communities and that you can agree not to take this forward.

As you know, you have a legal requirement to provide library services that meet the needs of communities and that reductions to services do not disadvantage anyone under the Equalities Act. We hope that if any cut is agreed that it has been fully assessed to avoid breaching your requirements based on both the Local Government Act and Equalities Law.


We urge you to look at [the evidence](#) for public libraries on our website and on the Scottish Book Trust [website](#). For example, public libraries are essential to improving literacy, tackling social isolation, and supporting mental health and wellbeing. They are also the most popular service local government provides and play a key role in digital inclusion 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 been vital in the cost of living crisis, as [backed](#) by Martin Lewis, and users need physical libraries that they can use and [the evidence of recent research](#) reaffirms the vital importance of library spaces to the public (a majority of whom stated that there can be 'no substitute' for them) and the cost of cutting libraries has a [high social cost](#).

Cutting opening hours could have the biggest impact on users who most rely on the service. For example, that may be young parents who can only attend at certain times, or working people on low incomes who require access outside business hours, or a vulnerable person who relies on the service being there at a set time every week.

How much value a local authority attaches to its libraries can often be a good indication over how much it values its people and whilst we once again acknowledge the huge challenge in balancing budgets, we hope you choose not to reduce library services.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara, Head of CILIP Scotland