

13th February 2024

South Lanarkshire Council
Almada Street, Hamilton
ML3 0AA

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to you from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland ([CILIPS](#)), the leading professional body for librarians nationally. Many of our members work in services such as your public libraries and we would like to raise our concerns over your proposals that may lead to 7 libraries closing. We recognise that 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.

However, 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. Any library closures would need to be 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](#).

Your libraries are cherished parts of their communities, and as well as the above they offer unique support with learning, Bookbug and similar vital early years activities, plus free period products, hearing aid batteries, dog bags and many other resources. From hosting an animal foodbank for the nearby Scottish SPCA Rescue and Rehoming Centre to mindfulness and mental health support sessions, as well as political surgeries and drop-ins on childhood speech & language therapy. Some of these closures would see users have to travel up to 8 miles for a library and this could highly affect more vulnerable users or those with disabilities.

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