

Stirling Council
Old Viewforth
Stirling
FK8 2ET

7th January 2025

Dear Councillor,

On behalf of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS), the professional body for library workers, I am writing to provide a response to your proposal to reduce library spending by 25%, including likely reductions in opening hours.

We are fully sympathetic to the huge financial challenges facing councils across the country and recognise that savings must be made, and we are pleased that you are committed to no closures. We have [advocated](#) at a national level for sustainable, longer term funding for local authorities. However, this cut would be a significant reduction to the service when library spending only accounts for just over 2% of your spending.

We strongly welcome the fact that you are consulting on this, and we would urge you to do this as thoroughly as possible, and with an equalities impact assessment forming part of your process. You have a statutory duty to secure the provision of adequate public library facilities for all those who are resident in your area, in a way that is also compliant with the Equality Act, upholding social justice for those with protected characteristics and reducing the inequalities of outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage, and it is important that the impact of changes is measured.

Our [extensive evidence bank](#) reveals that libraries in Scotland are more popular than the cinema and football combined, having seen both usage and demand increase in the past decade for what is often the only remaining non-clinical, non-commercial space left where a community can come together to learn new skills and access vital resources equitably.

Librarians are consistently ranked as one of the UK's most trusted professions and are guided by a set of [ethical principles](#) that ensure libraries can be key in upholding, promoting and defending human rights, equalities and diversity, access to knowledge, intellectual freedom, freedom from censorship and the development of information skills and literacy. These principles have rarely mattered more than today.

Libraries play an essential role in increasing literacy skills, with over 1 in 4 adults in Scotland likely to face challenges related to reading, writing and numbers, and reading for pleasure has been proven to improve the mental health and life-chances of young people.

Libraries are vital in increasing digital inclusion, reducing social isolation and improving health and wellbeing. Libraries generate £41 million worth of social value, translating to at least £6 for every £1 invested as well as supporting economic growth, and library engagement could save the NHS an estimated £3.2m a year.

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.

Libraries are evidence of how a country values its communities. They offer them a safe and trusted space that is committed to equitable access and reducing inequality. Before lessening the impact of a library, we would ask that you visit it and see and hear the difference it makes to people's lives. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss any of the above, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara

Director, CILIP Scotland