

## Our public libraries

I am sure that you are following with interest the increasing media coverage of proposed cuts to public library services in England.

As the independent body representing the library profession, we feel it important to give you a view on the situation. You should know the implications of these changes and be informed so **you can make sure the best decisions are being made for your constituents and their families.**

CILIP completely understands that libraries will not be immune from the substantial savings that are taking place across the public sector. However, we do ask that proper consideration is given to the true value of libraries, their contribution to learning, reading and literacy, community well-being, skills and economic regeneration. **It is a simple fact that libraries are even more vital in difficult economic times.**

Public libraries are a statutory service under the terms of the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964. I am writing to suggest some questions you might ask about libraries within your constituency, to assess their effectiveness and the impact of any proposed changes.

Your constituents look to you to provide leadership in local affairs and to help them hold the local authority to account for its decisions. I know that many MPs will be working closely with local authorities to help them achieve the best outcomes for communities in very difficult circumstances.

Whatever is said to the contrary, the public library service is immensely popular and attracts great loyalty.

- Over **three-hundred and twenty million visits** are made to UK public libraries every year.
- Over **fifty-six million visits** are made to public library websites in England every year.
- **More than 50% of the population** are public library members.
- **More people use public libraries than attend premier league football matches.**

*Letter continues overleaf...*

### **Key questions about the public library service**

- Does the local authority have a library strategy?
- Is the service, and any changes proposed, based on a proper user needs analysis?
- Does the service provide what local people expect in terms of location, accessibility, materials, resources, staffing and activities and how will proposals for change affect this?
- Have the public been consulted over any changes proposed?
- Are any savings proportionate to what the local authority needs to save overall?
- Has professional advice been taken in drawing up service reduction proposals?

This is now a national issue. Please help us ensure that the implications of reducing library services are understood and that free access to books, learning and the online world are retained as a right for all.

You will find a leaflet on *What Makes A Good Library Service* enclosed. This was sent out to leading councillors last year.

I am more than happy to meet you and discuss any concerns that you have. To arrange a meeting or for more information about public libraries, please email **[annie.mauger@cilip.org.uk](mailto:annie.mauger@cilip.org.uk)**.

Yours sincerely

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