

Dear Liz

Thank you for meeting with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and I to discuss Denbighshire's proposals to reduce library opening hours. As agreed, we have reported back to the City Council at a meeting last night, so it could give its response to the proposals.

As you are aware, for the last six years, the City Council has entered into a service level agreement and paid towards the running costs of the library, so that it could keep the library open. You will know from previous correspondence the City Council has very limited budgets, especially as it manages some 50 acres of open spaces and has just 1500 dwellings to share the precept costs. Nevertheless, the Council is well aware of the benefits the library brings to the community and was prepared to contribute £12,000 per annum to ensure the library service is protected. The City Councillors had always believed that each community council supported its library proportionately in this way, and they were very shocked and disappointed to learn that only one other community council makes this contribution, or is expected to do so. This does seem to be unfair to the council tax-payers of St Asaph as they are paying a double taxation for the library service, which is provided by Denbighshire in other communities at no extra cost, particularly as two very large town councils do not contribute.

The Councillors also noted the usage statistics for St Asaph are better than the average for Denbighshire. St Asaph library is open as a warm hub on Friday afternoons, thanks to the hard work of the staff in setting this up and obtaining grant funding. The Council is very concerned about the impact the proposed reduction in opening hours will have on our residents.

St Asaph City Council has contributed £12,000 per annum for the last six years to protect the library and therefore it does not believe we should be facing the same reduction in service as other community libraries whose councils have contributed nothing. For this reason the City Council has offered the following two options:

1. The City Council will continue to contribute £12,000 per annum on the condition that St Asaph library's opening hours are maintained as at present; or
2. If Denbighshire cuts the library's opening hours, the City Council will withdraw its funding.

Surely, in view of the financial contribution the City Council has made, and can ill afford, option 1 could easily be justified to the other community councils and may indeed encourage them to contribute to their own library in the same manner. The City Council's commitment to its library has been demonstrated by giving this financial support.

Kind Regards

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