



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Denbighshire County Council
Wynnstay Road
Ruthin
LL15 1YN

Our Ref: JD20890

30 October 2023

To whom it may concern,

I write in response to Denbighshire County Council's public consultation exercise regarding a proposed 50% reduction to the opening hours of all eight of the county's Libraries and One Stop Shops.

I appreciate that this proposal is part of a wider cost-cutting exercise to realise significant savings the council needs to make. However, I am concerned that reducing the operating hours of these vital facilities would incur a significant and detrimental impact on the lives of large numbers of residents who rely on the many services they provide.

Many residents have written to me in opposition to a reduction in library opening hours.

Denbighshire is home to a high proportion of older residents, the socially-isolated, those living in poorly-accessible rural areas and people on low incomes. As DCC's own website promotes, apart from the obvious wide-reaching benefits of book-borrowing and research services, the county's libraries offer residents many other valuable amenities, such as free public internet access and Wi-Fi, photocopying, printing, scanning, and cloud-printing. Some rely on these services to help them look for work or to progress applications for appropriate support.

I have been in contact with people who depend on libraries to maintain contact with their families, friends and services – owing to the good quality internet access. The reduction in library opening hours would prove difficult for those without adequate access to internet at home.

In addition, the One Stop Shops offer help and information about council services, the Blue Badge application service, and cash payment kiosks; these being all the more pertinent now that so many of Denbighshire's council offices and bank branches have closed.

Libraries are an essential tool in the battle against loneliness – whether among the older generation, lone workers, or new parents - providing meeting rooms and co-working spaces and children's rhymetime sessions. It is also important not to forget the voluntary groups and organisations which run their own vital services from within – for example the valued meetings of the reader's group in Rhyl library.

Furthermore, the Welsh Reading Group, Sgwrs a Sangria, promotes the Welsh language as much as our literature, culture, and heritage.

Our libraries served an important function as warm hubs for local people last winter. They provided somewhere people could sit quietly, read or interact with others over a hot drink - a welcome facility for the elderly, in particular, who were worried about their heating bills.

Libraries enable and encourage education, professional and personal development, entertainment, leisure activities, companionship, and more. They connect people with books

but they connect people with people and at no time has that been more crucial than now and nowhere is that more important than here, in Denbighshire. The reduction in service would impact the most vulnerable in our society.

In addition, of course, we must not forget the staff whose livelihoods also depend on these services and would be severely financially impacted by the reduction to their working hours.

In summary, our libraries and One Stop Shops are indispensable, and I firmly oppose the proposition to reduce their opening hours.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. Davies', with a wavy underline.

Dr James Davies MP