Moray Council Budget Engagement 2025-26 – Libraries Brief Summary

Overview

The survey opened on Wednesday 13 November and closed on Tuesday 3 December 2024. All paper copy responses were entered by Friday 6 December. It was analysed by the following groupings -

1. Overall (All participants who gave a response to individual questions)
2. Sex (Male, Female & Prefer not to say)
3. Geographical area (Buckie, Elgin, Forres, Keith, Lossiemouth, Milne's, Speyside, live outwith Moray)
4. Age groups
5. Council/Non-Council Employee
6. Overall 'Equivalised' (weighting applied to male / female cohort to show a more representative result based upon overall population demographics

The survey consisted of 31 questions, eight of which were open-ended allowing participants to add free-text responses. A total of 7,330 open-ended responses were received for these eight questions. High volumes of open-ended responses are usually indicative of strong feelings, as witnessed in this surveys analysis. Due to the high volume of open-ended responses an AI tool was used to summarise the feedback into the top ten themes for each question. A sense check was carried out manually to validate AI findings. **Appendix 2** shows the AI findings for each of the open-ended questions. Where appropriate reference to open-ended questions is made in the body of the report.

Analysis and source tables are held as backing papers to this summary, highlighting key points. Where percentages/proportions are used to express data, these proportions are based on the number of respondents answering each individual question.

Demographics

A total of 2,219 (2,064 online and 155 paper) people opened the survey and 1,699 (76.6%) completed all compulsory closed questions. 425 (81.4%) males and 1,194 (74.3%) females completed all survey questions.

A higher number of responses were received from areas with libraries affected by the proposals which greatly influenced the population comparison demographics. The Keith area had the highest proportion of responses (28.2%), significantly higher than area population demographics (8%). Collectively respondents from Keith and Lossiemouth areas accounted for nearly half (48.3%) of all responses received, yet only 22% of Moray residents live in these two areas, evidencing the heightened interest and engagement around the proposals in these locations. The lowest proportion of respondents were from the Forres area (5%), significantly lower than area population demographics (18%). **Table 1** and **Figure 1** in **Appendix 1** provides details of all area demographics.

The 65-74 age group had the highest proportion of participants completing at least one question (20%), followed closely by the 55-64 age group (19.3%), both significantly higher that general population demographics (12.4% & 15.3% respectively).

Uptake by the 0-16 and 16-24 age groups was limited, with a total of 63 completing the survey (3.7% of all completed responses), therefore age analysis for these groups should be treated with caution due to low cohorts where small number changes can impact with large proportional changes. Almost three quarters (72.6%) of respondents were aged between 35 and 74, significantly higher than the age population demographic (52.4%). **Table 2** and **Figure 2** in **Appendix 1** provides details for all age group demographics.

203 survey participants (8.9%) identified as being Moray Council employees. The completion rate for Council employees (74.4%) was lower than non-Council employees (76.5%).

Key Findings

The question set can be broadly split into four areas:

1. General usage
2. Reasons of use
3. Impact of changes in service provision
4. Health and Equalities

1. General usage

This section asked about which libraries were used, which were used most frequently, frequency of use and who in the household used library facilities. 1,986 respondents answered all these questions.

- 1,632 (82.2%) respondents stated they had used one of the libraries affected by the closure proposals. The results were heavily influenced by the higher number of participants from areas affected by the closure proposals completing the survey.
- Respondents from Elgin and Forres had much lower usage of affected libraries with 29.3% and 15.4% respectively.
- Respondents indicated that Elgin was the most visited facility (23.3%), followed closely by Keith (20.9%). 441 (22.2%) respondents from areas with a library affected by proposed closure visited Elgin Library.
- Respondents indicated they predominantly stayed within their geographical areas of residence to use library facilities. Proportions ranged from 78.8% in the Milne's area to 96.6% in Keith.
- The analysis shows that Keith was the most commonly used library with 28.7% (569) of all respondents indicating they had used this facility most often. Worth noting that this figure is influenced by the much higher number of survey respondents from the Keith area.
- Almost half of respondents (48.7%) stated that two adults in their household used libraries.
- For 57.6% of households no children used libraries. This proportion however should be taken with caution as there is no way of knowing whether households had any children.
- Two thirds (67.3%) of respondents indicated that they used library facilities once a month or more with 16.3% stating they visited more than once per week.

2. Reasons of use

This section asked about the reason why respondents visited libraries and the three most important services offered to them. 1,986 respondents answered all these questions.

- Traditionally the purpose of visiting libraries was to read and borrow books, this is still the case with 92.2% of respondents choosing this response. 43.6% of respondents stated they visited to use computers, a printer or WiFi and 39.9% visited to attend events or activities.
- 21.3% of respondents use libraries as warm spaces, but not one of their top three most important reasons as only 12.1% of respondents stated this was the case.
- 18% of respondents visit libraries to 'Seek support to deal with Council enquiry or national government scheme'.
- When asked to choose their three most important reasons for visiting a library the respondents chose 'Borrow or look at books, magazines or newspapers' (92.6%), 'Use computers, printer or WiFi' (41.8%) and 'Attend events / activities for myself' (34.6%).

3. Impact of changes in service provision

The core of the survey asked about opinions of the proposed changes to library provision and how they may impact. Seven of the eight open-ended questions were asked in this section. 2,050 respondents started this section and 1,723 completed all compulsory questions.

- 69.3% of respondents didn't agree with the selection of Aberlour, Buckie, Elgin and Forres as the four area libraries.
- An open question was asked to establish the reasons why respondents do not agree with the four proposed area libraries and to seek any alternative suggestions. 1,281 validated responses were received for this question. Respondents' main concerns were around accessibility issues and cost of travel. A list of the top 10 responses to this question can be found in **Appendix 2**.
- A third (33.9%) of respondents indicated they would use an alternative library if one or more libraries were to close.
- Using a five-point scale, participants were asked to gauge the impact closures would have for them and their household. Their responses indicated a significant impact with 92.4% choosing 3 to 5 (Moderate to Severe). 44.9% stated closures would severely impact their household.
- 73.2% of respondents believe that the loss of access to information is the most severe impact, followed by reduced availability of resources.
- Respondents indicated that an 'Outreach' service would not be popular with 60.1% either opposing or strongly opposed to the use of such a service to mitigate the impact of library closures. Only 13.4% either supported or strongly supported the use of the service, the remaining 26.5% not seeing it as either a positive or negative idea. 60.2% of respondents could see no benefit to this service and only 18.2% believing it would lead to increased access to resources. When asked specifically about the using an 'Outreach' service, if one of more libraries were to close, 75.6% stated they would not. A follow-on question asked for reasons why respondents wouldn't use a new outreach service, 1,171 validated responses were received. The most common response was around the lack of clarity of what an 'Outreach' service would entail. Many respondents raised concerns around limited access and others were sceptical of the feasibility and reliability of such a service. A list of the top 10 responses can be found in **Appendix 2**.
- When asked what specific services they would like to see as part of an 'Outreach' service, rather than providing suggestions of what could be included, many respondents used the free text to state their concerns of closures indicating that there is a strong desire to keep libraries open. They indicated their scepticism of such a service and expressed doubts about the effectiveness and reliability compared with traditional libraries. 623 validated responses were left for this question, a list of the top 10 responses can be found in **Appendix 2**.
- Respondents also had the opportunity to leave comments about any concerns they had about the proposed changes. 1,122 validated responses were received. The most comments were received expressing concerns about losing what they see is a vital community space and by closing libraries will disproportionately impact on the elderly, those on low incomes and those without access to transport. A list of the top 10 responses can be found in **Appendix 2**.
- The respondents didn't see a great need for an expanded 'Housebound' service with almost half (49.5%) stating they had no need for this service and a further 38.8% indicating that the expansion of this service would not meet their needs as an alternative way to access library services. 569 respondents left comments about why the 'Housebound' library service would not meet their needs. The top theme that emerged was around the importance of social interaction, with many respondents indicating that a 'Housebound' library service will not provide the same level of social interaction that is currently provided by using a traditional library. This may lead to social isolation which was also a common response. A list of the top 10 responses can be found in **Appendix 2**.
- Respondents had the opportunity to leave suggestions around how the Council can achieve the aims of maintaining a sustainable libraries service at a reduced cost or other ways to mitigate the impacts not

already covered in previous questions. 947 respondents chose to enter a response. Many respondents chose to use the free-text entry to complain and criticise the Council rather than answer the question. There were however a number who left suggestions such as reducing opening hours, utilising volunteers and using shared facilities/co-location. A list of the top 10 suggestions can be found in **Appendix 2**.

4. Health and Equalities

For those who use one or more of the libraries affected by the closures proposals, respondents were asked about any equality considerations relating to any disability, whether they were carers, young children, the elderly and those on low incomes. 596 (33.5%) left a response to this question with many detailing more than one concern per answer.

1,700 respondents answered the questions regarding the state of their health.

- Around 25% indicated the elderly would be most affected mainly due to having to travel further to access a library. Although smaller proportions, those with disabilities and those on low incomes shared similar concerns. A list of the top 10 responses can be found in **Appendix 2**.
- 489 (28.8%) respondents indicated they had a long-term (12 months or more) health condition or disability.

Of those:

- At 41.1%, the most common disability/Health condition was 'Long-term illness, disease or condition', followed by Physical Disability (32.3% and Mental Health condition (20.4%.
- 41 respondents (8.4%) stated they had a condition not listed. A number provided different or expanded descriptions of some of the conditions already listed. Other more specific conditions listed were dementia, neurodivergence (Autism, ADHD) and general conditions relating to the aging process.

229 (46.8%) of the respondents who provided a response to the equality considerations question also indicated they suffered from a health condition. Of those:

- Highlighted conditions, although following similar trends to ALL respondents, raising an equality consideration, were to a greater degree.
- 48.5% stated they had a long-term illness, disease or condition, 30.1% suffered from mental health conditions and 42.8% have a physical disability.
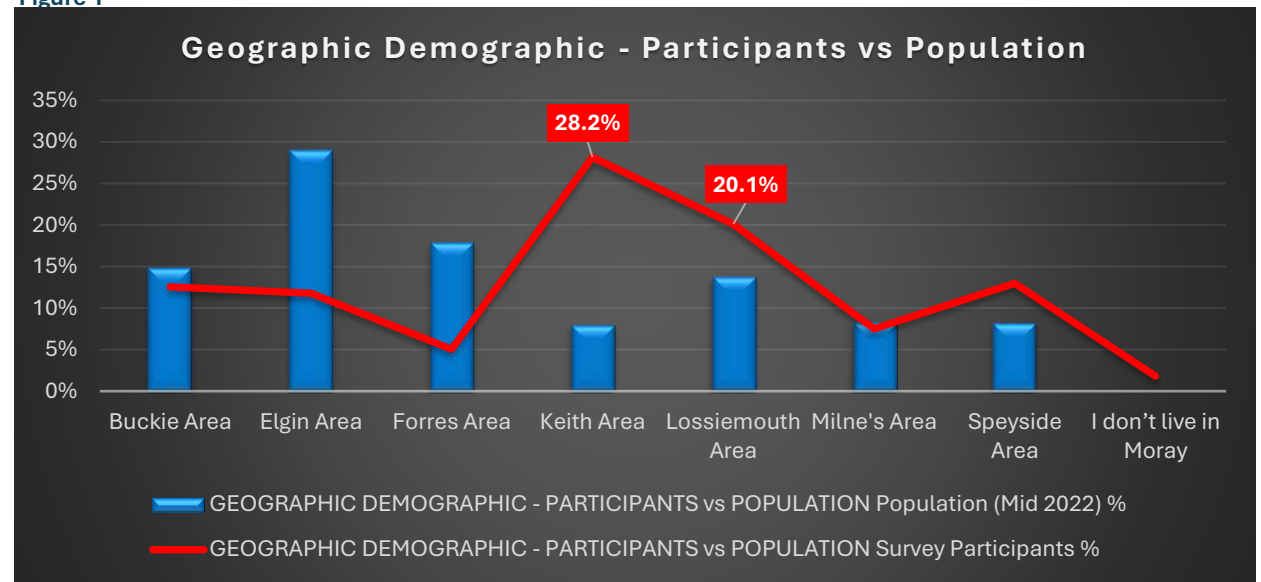
5. Conclusion

The overwhelming sentiment from answers provided by respondents' is a strong opposition to the proposed library closures, with a clear emphasis on the importance of local libraries as accessible, community-centred resources. Respondents' expressed concerns about accessibility, the impact on vulnerable populations, and the broader implications for community identity and education. Many advocate for retaining all libraries, highlighting the need for equitable access to information and social services in rural areas and the Council should look for cost savings in other areas rather than targeting community services like libraries. Respondents raised the lack of clarity in the delivery of an 'Outreach Service', their related negative comments may be a reflection of this. As ways of maintaining libraries respondents suggested reducing opening hours, utilising volunteers, and co-locating libraries with other community services. They suggested engaging the community in fundraising and partnerships with local businesses that may also provide additional support.

Appendix 1

Table 1

GEOGRAPHIC DEMOGRAPHIC - PARTICIPANTS vs POPULATION				
	Population (Mid 2022)		Survey Participants	
Area	Number	%	Number	%
Buckie Area	14,022	14.9%	279	**12.6%**
Elgin Area	27,325	29.0%	262	**11.8%**
Forres Area	16,886	17.9%	112	**5.0%**
Keith Area	7,520	8.0%	625	**28.2%**
Lossiemouth Area	12,992	13.8%	446	**20.1%**
Milne's Area	7,822	8.3%	167	**7.5%**
Speyside Area	7,733	8.2%	288	**13.0%**
I don't live in Moray			40	1.8%
Total Population	**94,300**		**2,219**	

Figure 1

Geographic Demographic - Participants vs Population

GEOGRAPHIC DEMOGRAPHIC - PARTICIPANTS vs POPULATION Population (Mid 2022) %

GEOGRAPHIC DEMOGRAPHIC - PARTICIPANTS vs POPULATION Survey Participants %

Table 1 shows the geographic demographic of survey participants in comparison with Morays general population. The figures in 'Red' and 'Green' highlighted text show geography areas either significantly higher (Red) or lower (Green) than general population demographics. None of the geographical areas closely match general population data, with Elgin and Forres showing significantly lower figures.
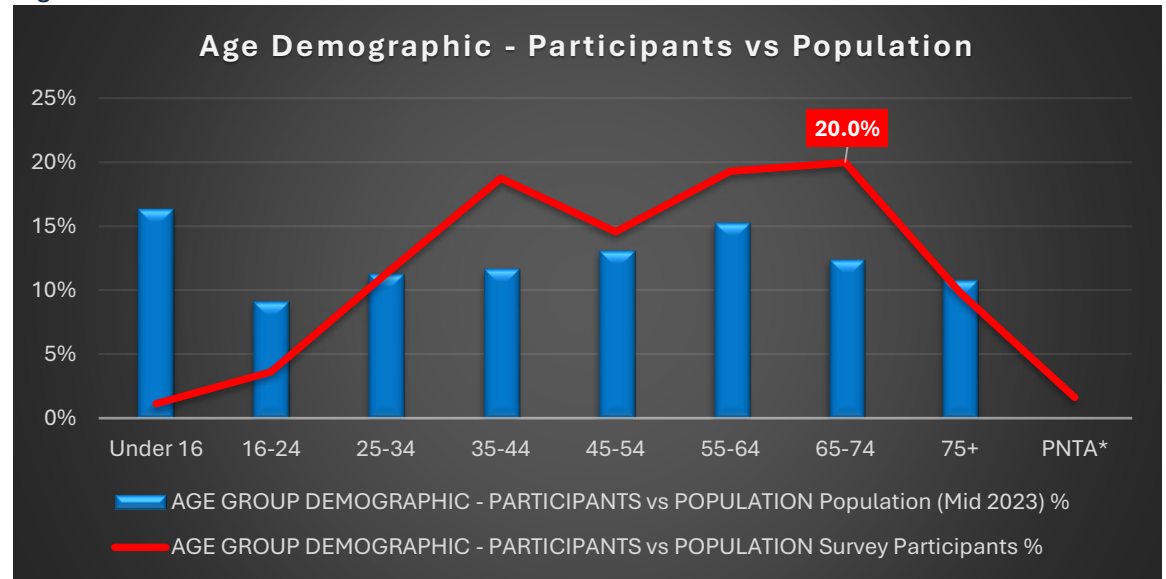
In **Figure 1**, where the line is above the column shows geographic areas overrepresented within the survey.

Table 2

AGE GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC - PARTICIPANTS vs POPULATION				
	Population (Mid 2023)		Survey Participants	
Age Group	Number	%	Number	%
Under 16	15,471	16.3%	25	1.1%
16-24	8,650	9.1%	80	3.6%
25-34	10,675	11.3%	250	11.3%
35-44	11,076	11.7%	416	18.7%
45-54	12,401	13.1%	323	14.6%
55-64	14,455	15.3%	428	19.3%
65-74	11,718	12.4%	443	20.0%
75+	10,224	10.8%	218	9.8%
PNTA*			36	1.6%
Total Population	94,670		2,219	

*PTNA - Prefer not to answer

Figure 2

Age Demographic - Participants vs Population

Legend:
- AGE GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC - PARTICIPANTS vs POPULATION Population (Mid 2023) %
- AGE GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC - PARTICIPANTS vs POPULATION Survey Participants %

Table 2 shows the age demographic of survey participants in comparison with Morays general population. The figures in 'Red' and 'Green' highlighted text show age groups either significantly higher (Red) or lower (Green) than general population demographics. The 25-34 and 75+ age groups are the only groups that closely match general population data.

In **Figure 2**, where the line is above the column shows age groups overrepresented within the survey.

Appendix 2 Responses to Open-ended questions

The top 10 responses for each of the open-ended questions are provided below. Analysis was undertaken on the responses provided by an AI Tool within Microsoft Excel. The data was not exposed to external analysis.

Question 14 - *We would like to understand more as to the reasons, factors and alternatives if you do not agree with the four proposed area libraries (Elgin, Buckie, Forres, Aberlour)?* **(1,281 responses)**

1. **Accessibility Issues**: Many comments highlight the difficulty of accessing the proposed libraries due to distance and poor public transport. - "It's good to go to the local library in Keith that is walkable from our house."
2. **Importance of Local Libraries**: Respondents emphasize the significance of local libraries as community hubs that provide essential services beyond just books. "The library is not just important—it's indispensable."
3. **Impact on Vulnerable Populations**: There is a strong concern about how closures will disproportionately affect the elderly, disabled, and low-income families who rely on local libraries. - "Many elderly people use library services and rely on public transport as they no longer drive."
4. **Community and Social Interaction**: Libraries are seen as vital spaces for social interaction, especially for those who may feel isolated. - "The library is a warm and safe space for people to get out and socialise."
5. **Educational Resource**: Many comments stress the role of libraries in supporting education and literacy, particularly for children. - "Libraries are essential to a functioning and civilised society. Somewhere social and public where one is not assumed to spend money."
6. **Concerns Over Proposed Alternatives**: There is scepticism about the effectiveness of proposed outreach services as a substitute for physical libraries. - "I do not trust the 'community outreach' service proposal."
7. **Financial Considerations**: Some respondents question the financial rationale behind the closures, suggesting that the savings are minimal compared to the community impact. - "The proposed savings quoted are peanuts in terms of overall expenditure."
8. **Community Identity and Pride**: Libraries are viewed as integral to community identity, and their closure is seen as a loss of local culture and history. - "Closing libraries is an abandonment of the most isolated and vulnerable in our society."
9. **Environmental Concerns**: Some comments mention the environmental impact of increased travel required if local libraries close. - "This would increase the carbon footprint caused by a reduction of 7 libraries seems nonsensical."
10. **Call for Retention of All Libraries**: A significant number of comments advocate for the retention of all libraries, not just the proposed four. - "I do not agree with the closure of any of the proposed libraries."

Question 19 - *What specific services would you like to see included in an outreach service?* **(623 responses)**

1. **Desire to Keep Libraries Open**: Many respondents expressed a strong preference for maintaining existing library services rather than implementing an outreach service. - "I want my local library to remain open!"
2. **Concerns About Limited Resources**:   There is a prevalent concern that outreach services would not provide the same breadth of resources and support as physical libraries. –"An outreach service would not do service to what our current library service is."
3. **Need for Community Spaces**: Respondents highlighted the importance of libraries as community hubs where people can gather and engage in various activities. - "A warm safe space, a community space to meet for learning and social events, computer access."
4. **Access to Books and Borrowing Services**:   The ability to borrow a wide range of books is a critical service that many feel must be preserved. - "I want to borrow books, access for children and elderly who cannot get to other places."
5. **Digital Access and Support**:   There is a strong demand for digital resources and support, especially for those who may not have access at home. - "Access to computers and wifi, printing services, book groups, children's groups, meeting times for people who work 9-5."
6. **Activities and Programs for Children**:   Many comments emphasized the need for programs aimed at children to promote literacy and engagement with books. - "Continuation of groups such as bookbug sessions, children's activities, and educational resources."
7. **Scepticism About Outreach Effectiveness**: Respondents expressed doubts about the effectiveness and reliability of outreach services compared to traditional libraries. - "I do not believe that an outreach service would be sufficient to replace the service currently provided."

8. **Support for Vulnerable Populations**: There is a clear need for services that assist vulnerable community members, including the elderly and those with mobility issues. - "Support with what we have at the library supporting the aged, community, computers, banking, just help."
9. **Need for Information and Assistance**: Libraries are seen as essential for providing information and assistance with various community services. - "Help with bus passes and council forms, someone to talk to and ask for help if I need."
10. **Concerns About Accessibility**: Accessibility is a major concern, particularly for those in rural areas who may struggle to reach outreach services. - "Not everyone can afford or access public transport and why should they lose local services when they also pay their Council tax?"

Question 20 - *Is there anything that concerns you about the proposed changes? (Please detail any concerns you have)* (1,122 responses)

1. **Loss of Community Space**: Many comments express concern about losing a vital community hub that serves as a gathering place for various groups, including children and the elderly. - "The library is a social aspect for me and my grandchildren to mix with other grandparents and children. We enjoy Caroline's story time."
2. **Impact on Vulnerable Populations**: The proposed closures are seen as particularly detrimental to vulnerable groups, including the elderly, low-income families, and those without transportation. - "The elderly in communities being isolated!"
3. **Access to Educational Resources**: Many users highlight the importance of libraries in providing educational materials and resources, especially for children and students. - "The loss of access to books, information and library events in my local area is my biggest concern.""
4. **Social Isolation**: There is a strong concern that library closures will exacerbate social isolation, particularly for those who rely on libraries for social interaction. - "The loss of a warm space for vulnerable people, the loss of spaces for community groups where transport links are poor."
5. **Inadequate Replacement Services**: Many comments express scepticism about the effectiveness of proposed outreach services as a replacement for physical libraries, citing concerns about accessibility and service quality. - "An outreach service is a dumb idea. Getting rid of social places is not good."
6. **Increased Travel Burden**: Users are worried about the increased travel required to access remaining libraries, which may not be feasible for many, especially the elderly and low-income families. - "I will have to travel 20 miles round trip to access library facilities."
7. **Negative Impact on Literacy and Education**: There is a consensus that losing libraries will negatively affect literacy rates and educational opportunities for children, particularly in rural areas. - "The closure of libraries will reduce access to services that are most needed by the poorest in society."
8. **Job Losses and Economic Impact**: Comments reflect concerns about job losses associated with library closures, as well as the broader economic impact on local communities. - "The loss of jobs, loss of facilities."
9. **Environmental Concerns**: Users are worried that requiring people to travel further for library services will increase carbon emissions and environmental impact. - "Increased carbon footprint, reduced amenities in Keith - what will actually be left that I pay for with my council tax?"
10. **Lack of Transparency and Consultation**: Many comments criticize the lack of adequate consultation and transparency in the decision-making process regarding library closures. - "The consultation period seems to be very short!"

Question 21 - *The Equality Integrated Impact Assessment for this proposal states that changes may impact on some service users covered by considerations relating to our Equality Duties; for example, those with a disability, carers, young children, the elderly and those on low incomes. If you have used library facilities at Burghead, Cullen, Dufftown, Keith, Lossiemouth, Tomintoul because of these considerations, please describe below the impact of any change.* (596 responses)

1. **Impact on the Elderly** - "Many of our elderly, including myself, will not be able to travel to the nearest retained library."
2. **Access for Disabled Individuals** - "I have a disability and rely on the monthly delivery of books to my home. It is a lifeline to me."
3. **Challenges for Low-Income Families** - "I'm in a low-income household so I won't be able to afford the travel on a regular basis."
4. **Importance of Libraries for Young Children** - "Young children love the library and will not be able to make use of services centralised in Elgin."

5. **Social Isolation Concerns** - "The elderly would be impacted and they would be isolated. The library gives them a chance to see folk."
6. **Community Hub Role of Libraries** - "The library is not just a library of books, it extends out to a much bigger context."
7. **Transportation Issues** - "I am a pensioner, you want me to travel either 40 mins on an unreliable bus service that is a struggle to get up those high stairs there and back."
8. **Mental Health and Wellbeing** - "As someone with a health issue that can affect driving, I'd be cut off from services were they to close Dufftown."
9. **Educational Resource Access** - "Children need access to books in a friendly environment."
10. **Concerns Over Equality and Fairness** - "The proposed closure of those libraries listed above would be a devastating blow to those small and remote communities."

Question 23 - *We would like to understand more as to the reasons and factors why you would not use area libraries?* (1,021 responses)

1. **Distance and Travel Time** - "Too far to travel - why should I have to travel for this service that I pay for?"
2. **Transport Issues** - "Public transport links from Keith to Buckie and Aberlour are very poor. Realistically I can't see people travelling to Elgin just to go to the library."
3. **Cost of Travel** - "I'm in a low-income household so I won't be able to afford the travel on a regular basis.""
4. **Mobility and Health Issues** - "I have limited mobility, chronic health issues and restricted access to transport, therefore travelling to another library out with the area would be impossible."
5. **Community Connection** - "The library is the heart of the village, used by many. Uptake has increased in the recent year or two."
6. **Inconvenience of Travel** - "It would require additional travel which I cannot afford (cannot afford a car) and public transport is also costly and inconvenient for me with young children."
7. **Safety Concerns** - "I wouldn't feel safe in the Cooper Park (or on a bus) at night."
8. **Environmental Concerns** - "It would increase pollution!!!!"
9. **Lack of Interest in Traveling** - "I have no interest in travelling far to use the library."
10. **Impact on Families and Children** - "My children access the library with the school, this experience would be lost."

Question 25 - *We would like to understand more as to the reasons and factors why you would not use a new outreach service?* (1,171 responses)

1. **Lack of Clarity on Outreach Service**: Many respondents expressed confusion about what the outreach service entails, indicating a lack of clear communication from the council. - "I don't understand what an outreach service is?"
2. **Desire for Physical Libraries**: A strong sentiment exists for maintaining physical libraries, with many users feeling that outreach cannot replace the experience of a traditional library. - "I want my physical library - KEEP KEITH LIBRARY OPEN."
3. **Limited Access and Convenience**: Concerns were raised about the limited hours and accessibility of the outreach service, making it inconvenient for many users. - "It would not be available when I need it, and the choice would be too limited."
4. **Community and Social Interaction**: Respondents highlighted the importance of libraries as community hubs that foster social interaction and support. - "The library is a safe haven for some people. The library staff are the only point of contact for some people."
5. **Quality of Service Concerns**: Many believe that the outreach service would not provide the same quality or range of services as existing libraries. - "An outreach service is a poor excuse as a 'replacement' for a great service I get at Keith library now."
6. **Transport and Accessibility Issues**: Accessibility issues, particularly for those without transport, were frequently mentioned as a barrier to using the outreach service. - "Travel would be a problem; I can't get to them."
7. **Inadequate Resources**: Concerns were raised about the limited resources and selection of books available through the outreach service. - "I can't see how you can provide a warm space, a meeting area or being able to browse books in 2 hours a week."
8. **Scepticism About Implementation**: Many respondents expressed scepticism about the feasibility and reliability of the proposed outreach service. - "I very much have my doubts that any service will appear for this so-called 'outreach service'."

9. **Impact on Vulnerable Populations**:   The potential negative impact on vulnerable groups, such as children and the elderly, was a significant concern. - "The library is essential for children and the elderly who may not have other means of accessing books and resources."
10. **Emotional Attachment to Libraries**: Many users expressed a deep emotional connection to their local libraries, emphasizing the irreplaceable experience they provide. - "The joy of a library can never be recreated through something like that."

Question 27 - *We would like to understand more as to the reasons and factors why an expanded housebound library service would not meet your needs?* **(569 responses)**

1. **Social Interaction**: Many respondents emphasized the importance of social interaction that libraries provide, which a housebound service cannot replicate. - "Because the social connection is what is vital. We have no other local spaces, apart from the community toilets, that we can access!!"
2. **Desire for Physical Libraries**: There is a strong preference for maintaining physical library spaces where users can browse and select books freely. - "I want a physical library, how much would extending the service cost?"
3. **Loss of Community Hub**: Libraries are seen as essential community hubs that foster connections and provide a safe space for gatherings. - "A library is a heart of a community. It is a safe warm place for culture. How do you want to replace that?"
4. **Limited Choice and Browsing**: Many comments highlighted the inability to browse and choose books freely as a significant drawback of a housebound service. - "How can you browse a book from somebody at your door? I do not understand."
5. **Inadequate Service for Diverse Needs**: Respondents expressed concerns that a housebound service would not meet the varied needs of library users, such as access to events and resources. - "It does not provide the full range of services that people in the remaining libraries can access."
6. **Impact on Mental Health**: The mental health benefits of visiting a library and engaging with the community were frequently mentioned. - "The library environment is more beneficial to mental health and concentration."
7. **Concerns About Accessibility**: Accessibility issues were raised, particularly for those who may not have reliable transportation to reach alternative libraries. - "I can walk to Keith library but would need to take a bus to go to another library or get someone to drive me to an outreach place."
8. **Scepticism About Implementation**: Many respondents expressed doubts about the feasibility and reliability of a housebound service. - "I have ZERO faith that the Council would be funding an 'expanded housebound library service' adequately for my area."
9. **Preference for Familiar Staff**: The familiarity and personal connection with library staff were highlighted as important aspects of the library experience. - "I can access the expertise of a trained library assistant who knows me and my requirements."
10. **Concerns About Isolation**: There were significant concerns that a housebound service would increase social isolation rather than alleviate it. - "It would keep me in the house rather than getting out and about."

Question 28 - *Are there other ways you can suggest of achieving our aims of a sustainable libraries service at reduced cost or other ways to mitigate impacts not already covered in previous questions?* **(947 responses)**

1. **Reduce Opening Hours** - "Reduce opening hours but please do not close Keith library. Perhaps put on more. Use the space better. Invite men's shed. Perhaps speak to the local sheltered housing teams and see if any tenants would be interested in a book club."
2. **Utilize Volunteers** - "Consider volunteer staffing if local libraries to maintain their presence in the local community. In other areas this has revitalised local libraries and transformed them into a community hub."
3. **Shared Spaces and Co-location** - "Move Cullen library into the main community building would solve having to close it."
4. **Community Engagement and Fundraising** - "Have library patrons organising support fundraisers. Donation boxes. Lossie Library is perfect location for a café - no café anywhere near and it's near a park. People like a café after swimming."
5. **Digital Transformation and Online Services** - "Expand online services, including e-books, audiobooks, and virtual programmes, which can reduce overheads and increase accessibility for users."
6. **Partnerships with Local Businesses** - "Explore the possibility of combining services or sharing buildings to save local services and facilities. For example could the library remain open alongside an area being used for groups."
7. **Grants and External Funding** - "The council should ensure that they are getting best value for their money from all services within and outwith. Look at cost cutting within the Council itself."

8. **Introduce Small Fees for Services** - "It should be the last things cut from the budget. Lobby national government for more clarity re: budgets so long term planning can be undertaken that does not request such drastic cuts to community services in some of the region's more remote places."
9. **Community-led Library Management** - "Engage with villages to obtain a way of keeping the libraries open, keep local libraries open, hire out the space to someone who would take in the Post Office service and that could cover your costs of keeping the library open."
10. **Cost-Cutting in Other Areas** - "Stop wasting money on building more housing that doesn't support the current resources ie schools, hospital, doctors, dentist, road infrastructure. Stop cutting rural area services...we pay just as much council tax as the people in the bigger towns yet get reduced bus services and resources."