
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

6 February 2025

Audit and Scrutiny Committee (Special)

Title:	Petition: “Proposed closure of Beith Library”
Purpose:	To advise the Committee of the terms of a petition regarding “proposed closure of Beith Library”.
Recommendation:	That the Committee considers the terms of the petition and agrees, or otherwise, to make a recommendation to Cabinet.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 In terms of the Scheme of Administration, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee has a remit:

“To receive all petitions and deputations submitted to the Council except those relating to the Council’s planning functions, which shall be considered by the Planning Committee. The arrangements for receiving petitions are as set out in Appendix B to the Standing Orders relating to Meetings and Proceedings of the Council and Committees”.

1.2 This report sets out the background to the receipt by the Council of 408 signatories on a petition addressed to the Chief Executive in relation to “proposed closure of Beith Library” which was acknowledged as a valid petition in terms of the Council’s Deputations and Petitions Procedure on 28 January 2025.

2. Background

2.1 The wording of the petition is detailed below:

“Please find enclosed the following signatures from the people of Beith who are very concerned at the closure of Beith Library.

The people of Beith rely on the various services the library provides for them for all ages in the community.

Please can we ask you to pass on this petition to the relevant parties before the February budget meeting.

Please do not close this library as it has been at the heart of the community for many years and our town cannot have the eyesore of another empty building.”

- 2.2 There is provision in Standing Orders for petitions relating to decisions that the Council is about to take.
- 2.3 The Head of Service (Connected Communities) has provided a briefing note on the background to this matter, which is detailed at Appendix 1 to the report.
- 2.4 In terms of the procedure for petitions and deputations set out in Standing Orders, representatives of the petitioners have been invited to attend the meeting to address the Committee. Spokespersons should be restricted to addressing the specific points raised in their petition.
- 2.5 The spokespersons have, collectively, 10 minutes to address the Committee. This may be extended at the discretion of the Chair.
- 2.6 Once the Committee has heard from the spokespersons for the petitioners, the Chair will invite Members of the Committee to ask questions of the spokespersons.
- 2.7 While it is for the Chair to decide the stage at which officers should speak to their briefing, previous Committee practice has been for the Cabinet Member or Officer to speak to this after the Committee has heard from the petitioners. The Cabinet Member or Officer will then respond to any questions that Members of the Committee may have. In this case, as no decision has yet been made by Council, no Cabinet Member will address the committee. After the submissions and questions have been heard by the committee the parties will be given to opportunity to sum up prior to the committee taking its decision.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Committee considers the terms of the petition and agrees, or otherwise, to make a recommendation to Cabinet.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 No direct financial implications arising from this report.

Human Resources

- 4.2 None arising from this report.

Legal

- 4.3 None arising from this report.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 None arising from this report.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 None arising from this report.

Key Priorities

4.6 None arising from this report.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 None arising from this report.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Head of Service (Connected Communities) has been consulted and made aware of the terms of the petition and has provided a briefing note which is attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Aileen Craig
Head of Service (Democratic)

For further information please contact **Craig Stewart, Committee Services Officer**, on **01294 324130**

Background Papers

Correspondence with lead petitioner

Petition – Possible Closure of Beith Library

Overview

The Council is facing unprecedented financial challenges which may impact on its ability to deliver front line services. An engagement exercise regarding the future budget was carried out in late 2024. This put forward a range of potential savings or ways to generate income and invited the public to feed back on the impact that these would have, should they be implemented.

This exercise allowed for early engagement with residents to find out how the 2025 to 2026 budget may affect communities across North Ayrshire. The feedback can then inform any decisions made by the Council.

Proposal

The engagement exercise included the following proposal around the library service:

This proposal is to retain the following libraries:

- *North Coast and Cumbrae - Millport, Largs, West Kilbride*
- *Three Towns - Ardrossan, Stevenston*
- *Arran - Brodick and Mobile library*
- *Kilwinning – Kilwinning*
- *Irvine – Irvine*
- *Garnock Valley – Kilbirnie*

The proposal will involve the closure of the following six branch libraries – Skelmorlie, Fairlie, Dalry, Beith, Saltcoats and Dreghorn.

Further information

The engagement exercise received over 4,000 responses in total, and 38 conversations regarding the proposals were held with different community groups. The feedback regarding all proposals which were part of the engagement exercise is currently being analysed.

No decisions have been made regarding any budget savings for the 2025/26 financial year and the results of the engagement will help inform any proposals which will be carried forward.

Conclusion

The Council will consider the responses to the engagement as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26.

North Ayrshire Council will meet on 26th February to agree its budget for the following year.

Rhonda Leith
Head of Service (Connected
Communities
North Ayrshire Council

10 January 2025