



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Damon Lawrenson
Interim Chief Executive
Northamptonshire County Council
One Angel Square
Angel Street
Northampton
NN1 1ED

11th January 2018

Ref: AL/EH/TI/1801

Dear Damon,

Re: Response to Northamptonshire County Council's Consultations on the Review of the Library Service, and on the Phase 2 Budget Proposals and Draft Council Plan

I write on behalf of the many residents in my constituency of South Northamptonshire who have raised their concerns with me about the County Council's Phase 2 Budget Proposals and its Review of the Library Service.

Over the last several months hundreds of my constituents have contacted me regarding the proposed budget cuts, with the majority of correspondents concerned about library closures and the withdrawal of rural bus services. I enclose a sample of thirty messages I have received on libraries (Appendix 1) and another sample of thirty on buses (Appendix 2); I hope these convey the strength of feeling on the two issues. I would expect that many of these residents will also have responded to the consultation surveys.

Although the two consultations are running simultaneously and separately, I would ask that this letter and its enclosures be considered as my formal response to both the Review of the Library Service and the Phase 2 Budget Proposals.

Review of the Library Service

My constituents feel exceptionally strongly about the proposed closures of several libraries in South Northamptonshire. I have received a large volume of correspondence from residents of Brackley, Middleton Cheney and Deanshanger, as well as from those in Roade and East Hunsbury, who are extremely concerned about the loss of these vital social and educational facilities in their local area.

To help support constituents I have written to yourself and Cllr Heather Smith on multiple occasions, urging for a review into the library closure proposals. I have also visited the libraries in Brackley and Deanshanger to see for myself the importance of the facilities to the community there. Whilst at Brackley Library, I met the *Friends of Middleton Cheney Library* to discuss their issues and I plan to visit Middleton Cheney Library in the coming weeks.

Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

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After hearing the views of my constituents it became apparent that examining key statistics and trends, such as the number of books borrowed, is not an effective indicator of how often the libraries are used. Libraries act as a community hub and provide a fun space for families, which is particularly important in the more isolated areas of Middleton Cheney and Deanshanger.

There are activities for children and adults, such as thriving craft and knitting groups, as well as IT access. Libraries provide a great cohesive service for the elderly and young children, which helps to tackle the issue of loneliness; a key pledge in my manifesto for South Northamptonshire.

Brackley Library

Prior to visiting Brackley Library, a group of Brackley residents came along to one of my recent drop-in advice surgeries to share with me their concerns about what the proposals might mean for their library. Brackley Library offers many clubs and activities for a wide range of ages, in addition to the vast availability of books. For instance, the Jobs Club that I started a number of years ago gives confidential advice and support on a variety of topics to help people find their way back into work, training or education. Other clubs include a Breastfeeding Support Group, Jigsaw Club and *Knit and Natter*. Harvey Sharman, one of our fantastic STEM Ambassadors, is also starting a BBC micro:bit coding club in the library each week commencing on Thursday 18th January.

Furthermore the Brackley Food Bank, which has operated in the library since 2010, handed out 450 separate packs to those in acute need in 2017. Residents of Brackley have expressed that without the resources provided by the library they would be disadvantaged as no other facility offers a similar service that is so widely accessible.

Deanshanger Library

I accepted an invitation to the recent *Showcase Deanshanger Library* event and I was struck by the strength of feeling in the community, evidenced both by the sheer numbers who turned out and the conversations I had with concerned residents and volunteers. It is obvious that Deanshanger Library provides a real focal point for the local community, and I was able to see for myself the various activities the Friends organise, including health walks, a *rhyme time* event for toddlers, and *knit and natter* gatherings for all ages. I also spoke to Paula Culley, the Library Manager, who expressed her view that the library is vital for the health and wellbeing of a community which is geographically isolated from surrounding population centres, particularly for older residents.

The Friends of Deanshanger Library are very concerned that the options they feel are being presented to them are to lose the library altogether or somehow take over the running and funding of the library. The former would be a devastating loss for the community, but the latter worries the volunteers as they don't believe they have the necessary skills or information required to take on such an enormous responsibility.

Middleton Cheney

The Middleton Cheney Library Supporters Group, together with the Action Group, are determined to preserve and expand the library service in Middleton Cheney. It is clear that Middleton Cheney Library is a valuable resource to all those that use it. As with the libraries in Brackley and Deanshanger, there is a regular programme of a variety of events, strengthening the community;



which is a key objective of mine. For many residents, particularly the elderly, accessing other nearby libraries is not practical or feasible.

Of course, the ability to access nearby libraries would be severely curtailed if the cuts to rural bus services were implemented as proposed, which leads me neatly into the next consultation.

Phase 2 Budget Proposals

My constituents have expressed their significant concerns about the impact of Northamptonshire County Council's budget proposals on their local bus services. I have received a vast number of letters and emails from residents in villages across my constituency outlining their views.

It is clear that the removal of bus services will have an adverse impact on the lives of my constituents. Many have articulated that bus services are essential in allowing those in isolated communities to access vital services elsewhere, particularly for the elderly and those without cars, and these proposals will be devastating if they go ahead.

The bus services are an important form of rural passenger transport, helping to shape sustainable mobility for my constituents. The flexibility of the bus services play a vital role in promoting social cohesion, helping those with lower incomes travel, facilitating students to access their education, enabling workers to travel to and from work, and access to healthcare. The bus services are often the only transport option for people who do not drive, have disabilities and/or live in remote areas.

Route 33/33A

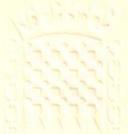
The removal of the bus services for residents in Hartwell means that it would become extremely difficult for some students to attend school and for other residents to access GP services and hospital appointments. This proposal will leave the villagers with no form of public transport whatsoever and affect the neighbouring communities of Quinton, Roade, Ashton, Hanslope, Wootton, and Grange Park; all of which are serviced by these two buses. The cancellation of the services will also cause a great impact on the disabled and elderly in the community, many of whom can't drive or afford private car hire services.

Route 87

The residents of the villages that use the 87 bus are very concerned about the destructive impact the removal of this service will have on their day-to-day activities. Elderly residents use the buses to access shops, hospitals and medical centres. Some of these villages on this route have no local shops, and the bus service is their only access. The cancellation of the service will mean that the community as a whole will be left isolated and detached.

Route 12

East Hunsbury residents have expressed great concern over the restricted bus services. These restrictions deny residents of East Hunsbury a reliable service, consequently making it very difficult to get to work on time or other regular appointments.



Route 86

Many residents will no longer have a route to work if the 86 bus is cancelled. Single parents who commute to work have expressed the financial strain the cancellation of the bus service would cause to their household. Residents would be left with no reasonable access to GP services, pharmacies, work, and school or even to see family and friends. The cancellation of this bus service would leave elderly people at a major disadvantage, limiting their accessibility to necessary services.

The effect of the above would be demoralising and disastrous for the communities that would be affected by these cancellations. Communities are in fear of being left behind, and are concerned about the potential risk of increased crime and anti- social behaviour.

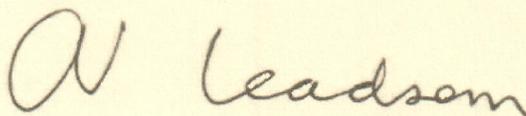
There were also a number of concerns relating to the provision of the excellent County Connect service as well as more general points that residents wanted to make. These, and a sample of the concerns over the library closures, are included in the appendices.

As you know, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government announced earlier this week that he was exercising the powers granted to him under the *Local Government Act 1999* to appoint an inspector to carry out an inspection to better understand the County Council's compliance with its best value duty. The Secretary of State has asked that the inspection particularly consider the authority's corporate governance and financial management systems. As I understand it, this decision was made largely based upon reports by the external auditor (KMPG) on the "adverse" value for money opinion in relation to the 2015/16 and 2016/17 accounts, and the September 2017 Local Government Association peer review into the council's financial planning and management.

The Secretary of State has asked the inspector to report findings to him by the 16th March 2018. Whilst I fully appreciate the budgetary pressures the County Council is under, my constituents have asked whether it might make sense to suspend its ongoing consultations into the Review of Library Services and Phase 2 Budget Proposals until the Secretary of State has reviewed the inspector's findings.

Thank you for taking this letter and the appendices into consideration.

With best wishes,



The Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom MP
Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

[Enc.]

Cc: Draft Budget and Council Plan Consultation, Northamptonshire County Council

BRACKLEY LIBRARY

Constituent 1

I am contacting you regarding the possible closure of Brackley library.

As a Brackley resident for the last 12 years, I use the library on a regular basis and am very aware of its importance as a community centre for many different groups to meet in, an IT hub with PCs available for the poorer public who can't afford a computer, a contact point for residents to meet a South Northants Council representative, a great source of local information and, of course, books for myself and young children to borrow.

Following the 2008 financial crash, the austerity programme has meant that the council buildings in Brackley have all been rolled into one, the library. If we lose this resource, just as the town expands by 1300 new homes, we will be considerably poorer as a community and I believe that this will also damage literacy levels in both local adults and children.

The suggestion that we can travel to Towcester library just isn't practical or realistic for most users of the library. As a home owner in Brackley, please can I ask you to intervene with Northamptonshire County Council to save the library? It may not sound much, but it is very important to so many local people.

Constituent 2

I am emailing to express my concern at the threat of closure of Brackley Library. I moved to the town just over a year ago and quickly joined and was immediately impressed by the quality of this Library. I have lived in a number of places in England and have found this the best small town Library I have encountered. It is well and intelligently stocked and the staff are superb. On my visits I have always encountered some community group or another making use of it. It is clearly a hub for a range of people and would be a serious loss.

Just before Christmas I saw people queuing to sign the petition, not crossing the road or hurrying by. The feeling in the town is clearly very strong and there is a great deal of indignation at the possibility of closure.

I hope you will reconsider and continue to support this key resource of the town.

Constituent 3

Please may we enlist your support to prevent the closure of Brackley Library?

We understand that decisions have been made on the basis of how many books are borrowed and that does not really take into account the amount of people who use the facility.

Brackley is expanding rapidly and losing this community hub will be a tremendous loss.

Constituent 4

Brackley Library has been at the heart of our town since I arrived here 10 years ago. It was the first port of call for me knowing no one in the town and heavily pregnant. The library has continued to feature very strongly in my life having had my first child and then using the library alongside the Sure Start service on site.

This was then absorbed by the library services (or so it seemed) and I went on to have a second child who was born disabled. I have made use of so many children's services in their totality (Rhyme Time, Storytelling, Arts and Crafts Groups etc., help with accessing support for my disabled child and help with signposting. My children are avid users of the library and even their school uses the services regularly...as do many other local schools including our secondary school.

I have seen many Magdalen students there making use of the computers for homework and assignments. I work in an Assisted living environment with over 80 residents and we always signpost them to the library when they arrive as a first port of call. You know all of the services that Brackley provides and if you do not please ask me and I will send you a comprehensive list of the over 60 services they provide within the community in absence of a Sure Start Centre - this is above and beyond the actual library services that we as taxpayers are entitled to retain.

I do not understand how those young parents that I come across daily on the school run and those older people I work with 4 nights a week will be able to get to Towcester. Sure - some of us have a car but many don't. I think we forget how many young families and older people particularly are really struggling to make ends meet. Oh - that is another thing the library helps with - the Food Bank.

I can clearly see the social implications of a closure and it will be devastating all around. Please advocate on our behalf to keep our library. I implore you. Please feel free to contact me further should you require any further information. Thank you.

Constituent 5

I am concerned about recent plans of Northamptonshire County Council to close our local libraries. I visit our local library in Brackley at least once a month with my children. We usually walk there and enjoy the few hours out together.

When I was a child, back home in Slovakia, I used to walk to library on my own at least once every two weeks and fall in love with books. My daughter have developed this love for books, but I fear that my 4 years old son will never properly understand the feeling when one walks into the library and gets sort of dizzying feeling from all the books waiting to be read.

I love progress and modern technologies, but I still believe that there is still place in today's world for place like library.

Please do not allow the closure of our libraries.

Constituent 6

Although I have never written to my MP before, I feel this issue is so important that I have to make an effort. I promise to keep it short and to the point.

I would like to put three reasons why I think Brackley Library should continue to function and not be closed to cover other costs.

Firstly, although I myself do not use it in this way, every time I go in it is a busy, active place where mothers and children are enjoying time with reading or singing or other group activities. Secondly, there are several well-attended groups which use the library - bridge players, walkers, special needs readers and of course the general public like myself who have the advantage of an excellent selection of books, newspapers and magazines and a very helpful staff.

Thirdly and perhaps not so visible at the moment but soon to become so, we have in Brackley a very large housebuilding programme in progress and there will soon be hundreds more people (and children) living in the town and needing the social and cultural opportunities a good library offers. Without the library, they would have to travel to Buckingham by car as the bus service is poor, and this will discourage them from going. As you are surely aware, libraries are so important for the early education of children and the later development of their interests and, more so now than ever, the support for the so-called 3rd age learners, which Brackley encourages in the U3A which is thriving and uses the library extensively.

I know your timetable is full but I hope you will give this and other e mails your serious consideration and help prevent our excellent library being closed.

Constituent 7

I was introduced to libraries by my parents at a young age and have been a regular, weekly, user both for pleasure and for information ever since. I would be lost without a regular supply of books, both fact and fiction so you can imagine the distress I have felt hearing about the possible closure of Brackley Library.

The nature of our library has changed over the years and it is obvious that it is now an important meeting place for many groups. Every time I visit the library it is being used for purposed other than reading. I collect my bus pass there, request information from the staff, use the library catalogue and would speak to the south Northants representative if necessary.

As 70+ older citizen I am able to drive and have a car but who knows how long that will be possible. The library is still within walking distance, and to know that my source of pleasure will still be available to me in the future is a comfort. The possibility of having to travel to Banbury or Towcester to obtain my books would be out of the question. Of course, the impact of the loss of our library would be felt by many people here in Brackley but my concern is that the children would miss out on the lifetime's pleasure and support that I have had access to. One should also consider the increasing population of Brackley, now, I am told greater than Towcester.

I would urge you to support the continuing existence of a library in Brackley.

Constituent 8

I'm writing to express concern about the current Northants County Council consultation on potential library closures. As you are aware, this will result in the likely closure of libraries at Middleton Cheney, Roade, Deanshanger and possibly also Brackley. The overall threat of closure affects so many areas. One of these is the digitalisation agenda of the all levels of government, as the drive to digitalise services is only possible where there is a safety net for those without relevant skills or access to tech. For example, District Council Revs and Bens teams are directing potential Universal Credit applicants to their local library if they do not have facilities to claim on line. The proposals seriously affect this option. Library staff have been trained to help people with these applications, and apps for Blue Badges and Bus passes. All that work has to go elsewhere if not at the library, or people cannot get the help they need.

Closures also significantly impact on Health and Well Being agendas. At Brackley library there are over 60 groups run in addition to book borrowing. These cover all ages, but of specific interest to you should be those that help parents and young children to spend time together, reading, rhyming, singing, relaxing, spending safe time away from home and bonding together over books. I understand this matter is of great interest to you through NorPIP and I would like you to reply specifically on that element of potential library closures. How is that space to bond to be replaced? My son and I have attended Brackley library regularly since he was a baby. We went to Rhyming and made friends with other parents and found support during what were for me sleep deprived and difficult early months. He got his first library card there before he started school. He was proud that he knew he way around and the staff knew him, when he was taken on a visit when in Reception. He loves the Summer Reading Challenge. He likes to go in after school and use the computers. I was hoping he might be able to do work experience there when he's older. It's his library. I understand the County is absolute strapped for cash. But this is 21st century Britain. Northants is one of the more affluent areas of Britain. Our MP is in a position of great power. Her party is in government. Is this really the best you can do? And I will be writing to Cllr Fiona Baker!

Constituent 9

I am appalled to hear about proposals to close our library in Brackley and others in the area.

I have lived in Brackley for three years and the Library was my first port of call to find out local information and also to meet other people. This is a tactic I always use when moving house, whether overseas or in the UK and I have moved house 20 times having been a service daughter and wife.

The Library offered me a huge amount of local information and also several classes a week for learning, making or meeting people, including being open seven days a week.

I was so impressed with the services that I joined the volunteer support group and even applied for a post in the Library. Although I am unable to offer my services to the library I still send customers I feel it would be useful to there and also pop in and use it when I need to.

Brackley library offers many services to everyone in the town from babies to the elderly and is a vital hub for its residents.

There will be a huge hole in the community if the library closes, which will stop residents from interacting with one another and become more isolated, very much like the 500 bus service with its changes but we won't go there!

I wish you and all of the supporters every success in keeping it open and am happy to support where possible.

Constituent 10

As a family of five with three teenagers we are extremely disappointed with the consultation Northamptonshire County Council have put out regarding the future of library services in Northamptonshire. The three options will have broadly similar results we think. My concern is that the council will not fully heed the results of the consultation because the financial pressures they have placed themselves under.

Whilst we appreciate funding for public services is very sparse this area of cuts has a significant direct impact across the community and particularly the more vulnerable sectors in our view. Old and young alike. It appears more a case of cut off your nose despite your face in the longer term. My daughter uses the Brackley library to study and research for her 'A' Levels as this is a quieter and warmer area than available at Magdalen College school.

I use the Library on weekends to read, and order books generally that I am unable to afford. The computer access is also much better at the library for research. We used the library extensively when the children were young which has fostered their love of books in this digital age. My wife is a primary school teacher, and I was the chair of a local pre-school when the children were younger. We have a lot of contact with children's services for various reasons, and we are also concerned at the loss of the children's centres as well at a time when we should be investing and supporting families more than ever.

MIDDLETON CHENEY LIBRARY

Constituent 11

I realise that you may well have had considerable public comment on the potential closure of Middleton Cheney Library and I have noted your supportive comments on the matter. I write as the Chair of the Middleton Cheney Library Supporters Group which was established six years ago in the face of a previous threat to the facility. In subsequent years we have managed a regular programme of events, films, practical demonstrations and literature related events and have been able fund seating, audio-visual equipment, children's facilities etc. to keep the library at the heart of this expanding community.

Whilst I could detail the County's inadequate reports on Library usage I can confirm, through event entrance surveys, that the Library largely serves the OX17 postal district and that it is increasingly a multi-functional facility serving all sectors and age groups with far more than the capacity to borrow books.

I would like to reinforce factors of which you are probably aware with regard to the Library. In the past six years it has provided a basis for TRAINING with both a local school-leaver and a junior librarian learning on the job and developing their careers. It has long been the basis for VOLUNTEERING, not only by seniors passing on experience, but for secondary school students obtaining an initial experience of public service. Increasingly it is recognised as the only place in the village where information on SOCIAL CARE (latterly branded as WELLBEING) is easily accessible, with staff, volunteers, IT contact and publicity that can connect those in need. Finally, possibly fulfilling an original purpose, the Library hosts well-attended History and Garden Clubs, is linked to Reading Groups, offers recent Films and a small shared space where CULTURE is displayed and maintained.

We are a growing village that in recent years has lost a pub, and more disturbingly, its Doctor's Surgery. The Library is the only non-commercial gathering place, and the only evidence that Northamptonshire County Council has a presence in this south-western outpost.

At the outset of the present 'Consultation' the Library Supporters enlisted a broader range of ages and interests into an Action Group that is spearheading a campaign. If the decision is closure then we are making every effort to obtain information that will allow us to make a sensible community-based proposal to retain the Library. Whilst the information on community-based libraries is prolific in the country, Northamptonshire has been unable to provide any practical guidance with regard to capital or revenue costs, or their framework for community management. Regardless, the action group will be putting a proposal to the community before responding to NCC by the close of consultation.

Thank you for your expressed support for a community facility that is essential to the several functions that I have noted above.

Constituent 12

Having lived in Middleton Cheney for over 30 years I have found the library to be not only a place to borrow books but also a centre where people can meet. I myself have now retired and the library has become more use to me now than it ever has been. My wife is also an avid borrower of books and continues to read numerous books per week. We are now grandparents of 2 lovely boys the eldest of which is 4 and has just started primary school. Learning to read is something that he loves and his weekly trips to the library to choose his own books is something he looks forward to. Taking this facility away from the older community is bad enough but to remove this from our younger generation is criminal.

Please do not close our library.

Constituent 13

I am sure you are aware of the threat to Middleton Cheney Library, as my fellow community members have written to you already. I wish to add my voice to theirs and raise my concerns for all range of the village and surrounding areas who use this function. My daughter's passion for reading can only be explained by access to hundreds of different books available to loan, books we would never have thought to buy or indeed be able to buy in such large quantities and I feel for the other children who may be raised without access to this, and how they will be affected.

I understand a great number of other people use the library but they can speak my passionately on these matters but I do hope you can have some say in how this decision is reached, surely the investment now is better than the long term effects of a village with no library for its children?

Constituent 14

I moved to this area just over 3 years ago and was really surprised and pleased when I visited the Library, particularly with the events organised, the fact that it opened on a Sunday and the range of products.

I have used the Library, attended film nights and am now investigating my family tree with the help of the computers and friendly staff.

I feel that it would be detrimental to the village if the Library closed and personally I would be unable to access elsewhere the facilities it provides. I do hope this will not happen.

Constituent 15

I am writing to you regarding our local library. Our library is the heart of our village and if we lost it we would all lose so much more than access to books. Let me give you some of my personal examples.

I am 33 and have 2 young children. I grew up in London and moved to the area for work. This relocation left me with no local family or close friends and I think that this is common for young professionals. When my first child was born I attended a few Mother and Baby groups (these were held in the children's centre but are now held in the library) and met a nice group of local Mums. These other Mums are my only local support and many of them are in the same situation as me. This group support each other in so many ways.

My daughter is 3 and my son is 1. We visit the library about once a week to swap our books and play with the toys. They both love visiting the library, and it is helping to build a passion for books in both of them. But more than that, it's a weekly opportunity to meet other villagers with whom we wouldn't otherwise cross paths. With no local family my children don't get to have regular time with their grandparents. I think that interacting with older people is vital for young children to develop socially and we are fortunate enough to have our library where there are usually a few older people to be found, both volunteers and other customers. We often stop for a chat which cheers up my day and, judging from the smiles, the older people who we meet also enjoy the social interaction available at the library.

When I was at school we had a fantastic local library. I used it as a place for doing homework and revision as well as for access to great story books. The idea that my children may not have a local library when they go to school is deeply saddening. A minimum one hour round trip on the bus to Banbury is not practical for young children to do after school. The 4 hour round trip to Towcester is obviously impossible to manage during the week.

The library may cost some money to run, but my sincere belief is that this cost is more than repaid to the county council in reducing the burden on doctors alone.

How many times does a new mum have to book a GP appointment to ask about a small concern she has with her baby rather than drop into the library run health visitor clinic, or an elderly person book an unnecessary GP appointment just because they're lonely and no longer have a library as a place to meet people before the 'savings' made by closing the library are gone:

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/443113/Lonely-elderly-make-30million-GP-visits-a-year-just-for-company>

When the County Council closed down the Middleton Cheney sure start centre it was said that essential services would be taken over by the library. If the library is also closed how is the provision for vulnerable families provided? Home visits? GP visits? These all cost money and offset the supposed savings made by closing the library. The library provides front line support and services to everyone in the village from the new born to the very elderly. It saves the county council money and brings happiness to so many people.

I implore you to do all you can to protect Middleton Cheney Library. I would prefer to keep the library as it is, but understand the need for some savings to be made. I have seen that community run libraries can work well when provided with good support from the local authority. Should this be necessary I hope that you will be able to encourage a fair deal for Middleton Cheney, for example a peppercorn rent for the building or a reasonable price to purchase it, a access to book stocks and access to help from professional librarians.

Constituent 16

As you are aware Northamptonshire County Council is proposing closing our (Middleton Cheney) Library.

I write to request that you use every endeavours and bring whatever pressure or influence you have on the decision makers to reconsider this ill-conceived plan.

The library offers so much more than just books (although books are great). My wife and I take our three children to the library most days and use so many of the services: books, homework club, rhyme time, readings etc. The closure would not only impact their daily life and remove their access to these things but will negatively impact their education and opportunity. They were in tears upon learning of the proposal to close it, goodness know how they will feel if it does close. What am I supposed to say when they ask why it's closing "it's because the council don't care "or perhaps "they have wasted money away on frivolous things"?

They have a duty of care to the tax payers to provide accessible public services such as this library.

Whilst I fully appreciate money is tight and they want to save circa £115M across the board, this coming from a council that just spent £50M on new building is hard to swallow. Furthermore the recent peer review recommended they sell it and lease it back along as a more cost effective measure (along with other points) but they rejected it out of hand. There are so many examples of their prolific waste so rather than cut our vital services why not use what they have better.

Please do what you can as it would be a travesty to lose this vital community service.

Constituent 17

I'm e-mailing you in regard to the proposed closure of our library. Our library is a vital part of our village. There are many clubs running there for the children and the elderly and it will leave them with nothing else. My husband has been researching into his family and their place in the village. In particular his grandfather who served in WW1 and his brothers. He added the photographs we copied to the local history held at the library which a local historian is compiling.

My husband has terminal cancer and while he could get around it really gave him an interest and took his mind off his illness. If the library closes, and this is my point for mentioning this, the history, clubs etc. will move to Northampton. This is much too far for people to travel. Banbury library doesn't want anything regarding Middleton Cheney as they class us as Northamptonshire and Northampton knows nothing about us and regards us as Oxfordshire and Banbury's problem.

So as you see, if we lose our little library we will lose so much more than books. We'll lose our villages history and the people who are the villages future will know nothing of its past. It's okay to look online but to actually look at the photos and talk to the families is something special.

Please help us not to lose it. I know in the greater scheme of things it seems unimportant but to the villagers it really is the heart of the community.

Constituent 18

I am writing to register my disappointment that our local library in Middleton Cheney is under threat. I live in the village, my husband, 6 year old daughter and I use the library on a weekly basis and it would be a significant loss to our community if it went.

When my daughter was younger we frequently made use of the Rhyme Time sessions and Health Visitor sessions. It offered a very welcome respite from the day to day challenges of entertaining an infant and offered the opportunity to meet other parents. Having held the position of trustee with my local Home-Start scheme I know that his kind of connection and support for isolated rural areas is crucial. With the closure of many Children's Centres in the area this extra service offered by the library is invaluable to parents of young families.

You may remember visiting the Middleton Cheney Primary Academy summer festival last year? My daughter and her friends were among those performing. And a stone's throw away from that school field where you sat pretending that the future of local children matters to you is the library building that your policies are intent on closing down.

I urge you to reconsider the decision to place Middleton Cheney library at threat. I appreciate that the Council face significant budget challenges but the value of resources such as local libraries cannot be played down. Though many of the impacts are qualitative rather than quantitative, its impact on the lives of those in the local community far exceeds the monetary costs to be gained by its closure.

Constituent 19

I am writing to you in respect of a potential closure of Middleton Cheney library. This is a vital community asset and it is of the utmost importance to keep such facilities open. The library is used for a wide range of activities alongside providing a wide variety of books and other reference materials. Libraries form the backbone of any culturally enriched society and as one of the most advanced western societies we need to set a positive, progressive precedent of inclusive and fully functioning access to library materials for generations to come. The educational importance of libraries is well known and well-rehearsed across both academic and societal settings. Indeed, libraries contribute to improved rates of literacy and thus enhance outcomes for young and old.

As a secondary school teacher I can advise you that libraries provide the basis for out-of-school access to essential reading materials for families on low incomes and are a solid basis for society mobility and the acquisition of culturally rich and progressive materials. This can only benefit society at large and will help us all to prosper for years to come.

This facility will be sorely missed if it were to closure and I urge you to intervene in this most important matter.

Constituent 20

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you in the knowledge that our village library is threatened with closure.

Middleton Cheney is a larger than average village that has been earmarked for development due to the facilities that we have. These facilities are decreasing at an alarming rate and yet the developments continue.

The library is a central hub of activity for younger and older people in the village. It offers support, access to computers, clubs and social events for people who otherwise would be stuck in their homes.

A few years ago you were a special guest at the primary school and witnessed the community come together at the midsummer festival. These are the very people who will suffer from the library closure - children will not have access to the books, the computers and the expertise of the fantastic library staff. Their parents will lose another safe place to take the next generation of readers. Their grandparents will lose access to clubs and social gatherings that allow them to mix with others.

The official line is that savings need to be made to pay for social care - surely a library in a rural location is a service specifically made for social care; for people who cannot access books and computers at home and for people who need somewhere to go to meet others. This might not be the designated purpose of a library but it is certainly what Middleton Cheney library provides.

I beseech you to use whatever powers of persuasion you have to block this damaging proposal and allow us to keep our library.

DEANSHANGER LIBRARY

Constituent 21

Deanshanger (as a fairly isolated, albeit large village) has a lot of young families, many of whom use the fairly recently built library.

Our library is a valuable resource in a village without many places for young & older people to go.

Please do all you can to keep it open.

Constituent 22

As I'm sure you are aware, there is a very real possibility that the library in Deanshanger will be closed in the next few months as the company that manages the libraries in Northamptonshire does not feel the libraries are viable. This will be a real blow to both the village of Deanshanger and on a personal level to my family as we regularly use the library.

As you know through being local to this area, other than the pub and school in the village, there is no real focal point in Deanshanger with no real centres of employment. The library however, provides a wonderful community environment with regular activities arranged for children to develop a love for reading and to enjoy the different feasts and festivities through the fun activities. The library building / community centre was only built in 2008 and it would be such a shame and huge loss to the village for this to be closed.

I have looked at the options being proposed by South Northants County Council on their consultation document but in none of the scenarios does it look possible for the library to remain open and I've been unable to speak to anyone at the council to discuss this further.

Please could I ask whether you could find out if it would be possible for the library to remain open as otherwise we will lose such a wonderful resource in the village.

Constituent 23

It was good to meet you recently at Deanshanger Library, thank you for being so supportive. I feel very strongly that Deanshanger Library should be retained as it is such an integral part of the community; in fact I believe it to be the real HUB of the village. It provides so much more than books. I would especially pick out all that is done to encourage new mothers with their babies to create friendships and a love of books and learning from an early age.

These can be difficult times for young families and to have contact and support for their well-being is so important. I have personal knowledge of this through my young neighbour who had a baby shortly after moving to Deanshanger, she was able to meet new friends by attending the mother and baby meetings and not feel isolated in new and strange surroundings.

Only this afternoon I passed a small child coming out of the library carrying a large selection of books, almost too many to carry. Where else would she have been able to find the stimulation that is obtained from reading. We are forever encouraging our children to forsake the internet, surely closing facilities such as libraries would drive them to their computer screens and all the complications and dangers that could result in.

Everyone involved in all the different and many events which occur in the library are so passionate about what they do and willingly give up many hours of time to volunteer for the benefit of their fellow man. Please use all your skills and contacts to ensure that Deanshanger Library will remain intact.

Constituent 24

I am writing to let you know how important Deanshanger Library is to me. I am disabled, with limited mobility and hearing impairment.

I am a member of the Friends of Deanshanger Library (FODL) and help to organise our programme of events throughout the year. These include children's activities out of term- time based on seasonal themes, adult drama productions such as productions of Dickens' novels and curriculum- support activities for Foundation Stage pupils from our Primary School. All of these activities create a feeling of purpose and pride for FODL members. Without our library, I would have no near or easy access to books.

The bus service is also under threat from NCC cuts, and this means that Towcester Library would be difficult to reach. NCC appear to underestimate the value of safe, clean, accessible spaces, such as village libraries, like ours, for disabled people such as myself. A visit to the library, whether to find books or meet other readers, is an outing which provides company, security and comfort for disabled people. The building has an accessible toilet, is warm, inviting and run by qualified well-being being staff.

Other groups which I belong to also use the space. I regularly attend Memories Group meetings there, in order to tape- record the memories of villagers from earlier times. This is passed on to the Heritage Society for our archives; many people comment on the warm welcome which they receive from library staff.

The village Reading Group, of which I am a member, meets in the Library every month. This is again an occasion which is marked by companionship, the sharing of ideas and stimulating discussion all taking place within an educational environment.

Please do continue to support the Friends of Deanshanger Library, in their efforts to keep this valuable and vital asset alive for all villagers to use. People in our community are proud of our inclusivity as a village and our Library is one of the places where we can all meet, learn and grow together. NCC show a short-sighted and careless approach to the problem of saving money by attacking communities such as ours, by attempting to close libraries.

Libraries are good for both personal well-being and the sustainment of village identities.

Thank you for your time spent on this matter. It is deeply appreciated.

Constituent 25

I am writing to personally to share my reasons why Deanshanger Library is so important to me and how it has impacted on my life.

I have been involved with the library for a great many years both when it was in a Portakabin and in its new building, it has always been a resource that I used to extend my learning and leisure opportunities at important times in my life.

As my children were growing up I would take them along to share with me that magic of the world of books and introduce them to the way it could stir their imaginations and sense of wonder, as well as help them widen educational opportunities.

Today they have passed on their love of books and learning to their own children, something that will be lost to the next generation of children if this library closes.

I have also seen how by volunteering in the library as both Chair of the Friends Group and as the Leader of our Rhyme time Sessions you can change the lives and experiences of both parents and their children as well as myself has been one of the joys of having this partnership and I would be deeply saddened if we were to lose this as a result of the library closing.

The links we have established with the local Primary School has been another experience that has had a positive impact on my life as it has enabled me to create opportunities for future generations and also pass on my love of books and the way it can open up their imaginations.

Our library is at the centre of our Community and provides so many different experiences across the social and age groups in the village as well as extending the opportunities to introduce new and innovative ideas and activities.

I have always recognised that books and the library are part and parcel of how we value our culture and by proposing to close them you are saying that you do not value learning and the impact it can have on everyone's lives no matter your age or social standing.

The thought that we could lose our library feels me with sadness but more importantly anger at the fact that the legacy I was able experience and pass on to my children and grandchildren would be denied to future generations and all in the name of saving money.

Andrea please fight with me and ensure that the County Council rethinks this short sighted and immoral proposal and keep our libraries open as beacons of learning and places where everyone can meet and share new experiences.

Thank you for reading this letter and for your support.

Constituent 26

I'm a resident of Deanshanger village, and am writing to you regarding the potential closure of the library. I moved to the village in 2016, whilst pregnant with my first baby. Knowing no one in the local area, I was a little daunted about what I would do once my baby had been born.

Deanshanger Library was a brilliant service to use, the Under 1's learning group on a Wednesday morning became my weekly outing in the early months, and I soon created friendships in the village with other mums. We now have a lovely circle of friends, and I dread to think what my position would be had I not met these lovely people. Some of them have themselves grown up in the village and have family here, some don't drive so are reliant on the library for somewhere to go, and some, like me, didn't know anyone else locally.

The weekly baby group offers such a lovely, welcoming environment, and the lady who runs the group is amazing. I first took my daughter when she was 9 weeks old – she's now almost 10 months and we still manage to make it to the session most weeks; I don't know what I would have done without it. It's a source of friendship, advice, friendly faces and a place to learn new things about the people and goings-on around the village.

I also take my daughter to Rhyme time on a Thursday. Again, this has been a brilliant excuse for me to leave the house with my baby, and the fact that both these sessions I've mentioned are free of charge is something I really appreciate. Considering other baby groups in Milton Keynes are £4 - £7 per session, it can get really pricey simply to take your baby out – but with the library just a short walk away I always felt that there was someone nearby ready and waiting to greet us... a lifeline!!!

Even now, these groups are sometimes the only time I leave the house in any given week, other times we are busier with family or shopping etc. in Milton Keynes. But for those weeks when I have no other plans, the library keeps me sane and gives my daughter the opportunity to interact with other children.

As time goes on we are hoping to expand our family in the coming years, and I would hate to think that the library would not be there for me with my next baby, as it was with my first. And the same goes for any other new mums in the area who may need help, advice and simple support from other mums nearby. I hope this information can be used in your case against the library closure.

Constituent 27

We have been residents of Deanshanger since 1986. We learned recently that the County Council has published 3 Options in respect of the future County Library service & we have now read the Consultation online. We are very concerned that all the Options proposed would result in the closure of Deanshanger Library as a County-proved service; only Option 1 envisages the possibility of limited Council support for a volunteer-managed library. We believe that this 'offer' as it is phrased is unrealistic, particularly in a commuter village like Deanshanger:

The technical skills provided by a professional librarian are unlikely to be found in a group of volunteers, however well-motivated.

Organising a committed & consistent group of volunteers to provide long-term management of a library will be a very difficult proposition.

Maintaining the levels of consistent fundraising to finance the rental & running costs of a library will require continual, virtually fulltime efforts by someone.

The offer of Council 'support' to a community-manager library is likely to mean advice rather than the subsidy of costs to any significant degree

We completely understand the County Council's difficult financial position as a result of Central Government's continued pressure in reducing grant support. The urgent need to fund Social Care is clearly vital for the whole population & the costs involved are increasing rapidly. It is our view however that the cost savings involved in closing a few local, very part-time, libraries with very small staff costs are almost negligible in relation to the major issue of Social Care funding. This requires concerted & all-party national agreement to address the problem that has been developing for at least two decades. Taxation will have to be increased & people will have to be prepared to have their assets used to fund their care. The kind of savings proposed by the Council will do no more than delay the realities of adequate social care funding, whilst doing great damage to the quality of life of this village.

Lending libraries suffer from being an often unseen & unappreciated service & thus an easy target for opportunistic cuts in grants. They are however an essential community service that have been one of the outstanding examples of civilized, compassionate & educated modern Britain. In the situation of rural villages like Deanshanger, they have added value in providing learning & recreational reading as well as social & support networks for vulnerable & isolated people. Our Library with its helpful & imaginative librarian has initiated a range of weekly & seasonal support opportunities for isolated elders & young parents, such as reading groups, creative writing groups, children's story time, school holiday reading & activities and more. All this has been achieved because there is a part-time library professional in post who can support these 'invisible' but really important social cohesion activities, whilst providing a core lending library service.

Local Authority library closures nationally have previously raised widespread distress & outrage; it is highly regrettable that short-term cost saving expediency is now proposed by this Council, despite the clear evidence that ordinary people's well-being will be adversely affected.

We urge you to strongly advocate with the County Council for a change of direction on this proposal.

Constituent 28

I am writing to you with concern regarding the proposed closure of Library's in Northamptonshire. The impact that this will have on rural communities will be greatly felt.

I have lived in Deanshanger for 16 years and have always felt proud of the facilities our large village has to offer. The library has offered numerous services and has supported the literacy skills of our youngsters, working very closely with the village schools, Pre-schools and toddler groups. It has taken on the vital services cut back from Children's Centres and offers welcome links to older residents.

When the Library opened its new purpose built premises in the Community Centre (as opposed to the Portakabin that housed it when we first moved here), we were assured of its long term part in the village identity, with backing from Councillor Allen Walker who opened it.

I would appeal against any decision to close the Library on the grounds that it is a vital, vibrant and necessary service within our community. It promotes literacy, inclusion, and a lifeline to those who need its vital services.

Please help us to retain this service in our village!

ROADE LIBRARY

Constituent 29

I cannot begin to stress how important our local libraries are, in this case Roade village. Our library here is relatively small but what it offers our village and community is huge.

Since the sure start centre was closed, many services have been taken over by the library and the Volunteers that run them. These have included groups for mums with babies and young children. Personally without this service I myself would have felt very isolated and would not have met so many local people in the same situation as me.

The library here goes above and beyond its call of duty for the whole community it serves and would be a devastating loss.

Please can you in some way support and listen to the residents who urge the library/libraries in Roade and Northants to stay open.

EAST HUNSBURY LIBRARY

Constituent 30

As you are aware there is to be many closures of libraries in the Northampton area, managers to lose jobs and staff to re-apply for their positions. I am concerned as a carer that members of the whole community will not have the facility in the future.

I feel we must keep our libraries for our children, it is one of the last traditions that we have and is a place to feel safe, meet others and have various facilities for our various clubs.

The manager at East Hunsbury has worked so hard to give quality service, options and facilities. His job is now unsafe, he is in a wheel chair and the only wage earner in his family.

I am concerned for our senior members of society and others who will be unable to have or pay for a transport links.

ROUTE 33 / 33A

Constituent 31

Myself and many more, some old, some disabled and some who just have no alternative to public transport are in dismay regarding the proposal for shutting down funding for the 33a bus service that runs through our village of Hartwell to and from Milton Keynes.

The loss of this service will hit hardest not only ourselves but our children, older members of our village plus people working at head injuries units, who as part of the rehabilitation use the service there will clearly be a knock on cost that will outlay the proposed savings for the County council in the near and long term talking to almost everyone in our village we are united in this as and feel very strongly against the cut.

Please take concerns to the very top.

Constituent 32

I am a resident of Hartwell and a member of your constituency.

As you are no doubt aware, there is a proposal by Northamptonshire County Council to remove their subsidy towards the 33/33A bus route which serves Hartwell, amongst other Northamptonshire villages. Should this subsidy be removed, the bus route will be cancelled and our village will be left without any form of public transport whatsoever.

Please may I ask you, as the MP for this village, to please look into this matter and help us to fight to keep our bus service?

Please see below a copy of my email to Northamptonshire County Council regarding this matter for your information.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require anything further.

Constituent 33

I strongly object to the removal of the bus subsidy for service number 33/33A and the probable result in the withdrawal of this service through Hartwell. Many residents depend on this for visits to Northampton and Milton Keynes for doctors and hospital visits, shopping, education for 16 to 18 year olds, visiting friends, getting to work and connecting to railways stations at Milton Keynes, Wolverton and Northampton.

Public transport also forms the backbone of our sustainable transport system for the future. If we lose it, we will never get it back again. Remember the Beeching cuts to our railways in the 1960's and how we regret those cuts now. It is very short sighted and will leave our rural communities isolated.

Constituent 34

I write to you regarding the above. I have very serious concerns about the impact of this on the village of Hartwell and other surrounding rural areas and urge you to consider this decision with great care. Not only for the here and now, for the individuals whose lives will be impacted greatly in the coming months and years but for the long term socio-economic future of this part of Northamptonshire.

In case you are unaware, Hartwell is a village with a primary school, shop, 2 pubs and a church. We are very fortunate to have Salcey Forest on our doorstep, in recent years we have watched it grow as a tourist attraction as people from the surrounding areas come to escape the stresses of life and embrace nature. Despite this, we haven't seen much investment in the village or surrounding ones (apart from housing developments of course, putting greater strain on our already stretched services). We have no health visitor clinic in Hartwell anymore, no doctor's surgery, a primary school often unable to accommodate village children due to oversubscription, no secondary school and an already limited bus service. We recently found out that the Library and Children's centre in Roade which many people access by bus is set to close too.

I am a parent to 2 young children, a secondary school teacher and daughter of retired parents and I worry enormously about the impact this will have upon us all; the very young, older people and young adults in particular. It may save money in the short term however, taking the bus service will only serve to reduce our social mobility, increase poor health and limit our life chances and roll forward, increase rural poverty, inequality and deprivation.

Many people rely on the bus to access their GP on Roade or Hanslope, these are often the elderly, the long term sick and those with young children. I would like to think that as a community we are strong, that we help each other and whilst this is true, the reality is the pressures work and family life mean I can barely find the time to take myself to the doctors let alone a neighbour in need. We work longer and longer hours, we have less free time than we did 30 or 40 years ago and time for altruism becomes less and less every year. I have volunteered to support the community effort to keep the library open but cannot drive a bus. As prices increase and salaries fall and people are pushed to work longer hours for extra money or simply to set them aside from their colleagues in increasingly uncertain times. By taking away the bus service you are limiting access to vital services such as the pharmacy, GP and the hospital. The outcome of this will be two-fold, people will be sicker, less productive and more vulnerable. Inevitably greater strain will be placed on the Ambulance service as people miss consultant appointments, fail to collect prescriptions and get the regular check-ups they require. GP services are at breaking point, they don't have the capacity for home visits and delivering prescriptions.

Access to education is a very serious concern, several young people use the buses to access higher education services. Many of them have no other means of transport and without access to education or part-time jobs will never have the means to afford a private car. Without this access they will never be able to access higher paid jobs and in many cases, a job at all. There are very few jobs available in the village and most of those are taken by suitably qualified people who may not live in the village. Without this, there will be higher unemployment and the greater potential for an increase in crime, anti-social behaviour and we will become the disenfranchised, sick and those more reliant on the services they struggle to access.

Constituent 34 (cont.)

I know for many it will limit their access to family, the family members who often provide childcare to working parents, the family members who are carers or those who just quite simply want to fulfil that human desire to be with loved ones. This is unforgivable and will inevitably lead to increased levels of loneliness and isolation and even the greater fracturing of families who are already under increasing time and financial pressures.

In all cases, taxis' are simply out of the question for most, the cost of them prohibitive for even the more affluent, a taxi ride to Northampton can cost £20 or more, to Milton Keynes the costs are greater and village to village is often similarly expensive as taxis' have to be sourced from elsewhere, who has £40 to spend on a round trip to do their shopping? Access the library or attend a medical appointment? Isolation too is a real issue, without buses some people may never leave the village or their home even. The implications are beyond desperate for some.

Walking is simply impossible for the elderly and infirm and downright dangerous for those of us able, there are no footpaths or street lights along these routes and non-negotiable for anyone with small children or pushchairs.

I am not unrealistic, I know there isn't a bottomless pit of money to fund every service and something has to give but it's fair to say, a lot has been given already locally and nationally. This is a money-saving exercise that will without a doubt lead to greater social problems in the future. Rural poverty in the UK is well documented; I realise we are not hill farmers in a remote part of Yorkshire but nonetheless, taking the bus service will create more social issues, increase unemployment, increase poor health, limit our life chances, social mobility and quality of life. How can people improve their livelihoods without access to these essential services? I fail to see how this can be justified on any level. As a regular user, I was angry about the libraries closing but felt comfort in the fact people could still access central points to essential for young children but removing the bus service too would be neglectful.

I look forward to your response to my concerns and how you propose to address the issues that will prevail as a consequence of the bus service being cancelled.

Constituent 35

I am writing to express my concerns with regard to the potential removal of the bus subsidy in Northamptonshire. The route that affects my village is the 33/33A between Milton Keynes and Northampton.

Whilst I understand that there is a need for the Council to find ways of making savings so that costs do not exceed funds I cannot see the logic in cutting subsidies to services like the 33/33A which is the only service that visits Hartwell where I live. Whilst along with the other 30 services that are included in this proposal this service may well not be "commercially viable" (the term used in the Equal Impact Assessment statement produced by Northamptonshire County Council) with regard to the income collected on the bus versus the cost to run the bus but there are however factors other than financial that need to be considered when decisions like these are made.

Constituent 36

I am writing to express my concerns with regard to the potential removal of the bus subsidy. The route that affects our village is the 33/33A between Milton Keynes and Northampton. I would like to draw your attention to the following points:

- The bus service is used by non-drivers accessing employment in Northampton, Milton Keynes and places in between.
- The bus service is also used by the elderly who no longer drive or can afford to keep a car, and those with children etc. to get to our local doctors which is out of the village, to opticians, and other key services.
- We don't have local taxis so we have to use town ones which cost a lot of money to travel between say Hartwell and Roade for the doctor's surgery.
- Currently we are a rural community with few local services, but access via the bus to many facilities in the nearby towns. However, without that access, we render leaving people as isolated. This dramatically reduces quality of life for many - and I'm sure would have a knock on affect to mental health for those affected.

While I understand the perpetual need to cut costs, may I suggest the view to remove the subsidy is short sighted, incredibly unfair, and from what I understand giving little consideration to the knock on affects beyond cutting the budget. I see no evidence that this is being taken into consideration minded of other policies; environmental impacts, education policies (that have enabled students to choose schools outside of catchment, perhaps decisions taken minded of bus routes available that will no longer be available - will these students have to change schools?), pushes to improve mental health, etc.

The knock on effect financially also appears to be non-existent in the proposal - the effect of people changing employment and the recruitment costs associated, the cost to the individual of taxis to travel to work/doctors etc. therefore affecting disposable income and spending ability.

I wonder if this proposal is not being taken in the spirit of the provision of services which you are obliged to provide. I cannot believe that we have a principle in our regulations that concessionary fares via bus passes must be given to residents yet you are not obliged to provide the bus. It seems that you are using a poorly thought through regulation to shirk your responsibility to this sector of our community.

It doesn't feel that all possibilities are being considered - our current bus service is frequent and perhaps above that provision in other rural areas. I see no evidence that a reduced service is being considered - rather an all or nothing approach.

It is clear from your officer who met a group of us in Hartwell, however, that parish councils could collectively subsidise the bus route instead. It seems like a ridiculous notion - after all - the funds come from the same pot. I know this is not how the money is managed, but effectively it's the same pot. So, the parish councillors - 13 or so on the route - all volunteers, are expected to spend time working this through, managing conversations no doubt with the Milton Keynes council, negotiating the service if they cannot raise all the funds. It's not really a sustainable approach is it? To pass responsibility on to volunteers.

Constituent 36 (cont.)

And the process has not been thought through if this is to happen - their budgets have to be put together by the end of the year. I would be concerned that if they do make that provision, they've effectively signalled a way out for Northants council to go ahead and make the decision on the 22 Feb to withdraw funding. And if they don't provision, they'll have to make the call later in the year to take the money away from another parish council spend. It seems a dangerous precedent to set - will parish councils end up propping up doctors' surgeries whose budgets are cut? Schools in crisis? But let's say it goes ahead this way - what happens when the parish council budgets are cut? They will be the ones who then ultimately have to withdraw the bus service - nicely swerved Northants council.

I'm very disappointed in the proposals, and I feel you are being incredibly short sighted in doing this. I hope you reconsider and restore my faith that sensible decisions can be made.

Constituent 37

Are residents expected to walk everywhere??? Especially the Elderly, Disabled, Parents with Small Children, Non drivers!!!

How are students expected to get to school? Do you propose they get up at the crack of dawn and walk miles just to be able to get an education that they are entitled to!!?

If the Council of Northampton did an actual survey of exactly how many people use the bus service from Hartwell each day they would realise that it very much essential to daily life. As it is to all the surrounding villagers. Buses going through the villages at essential times are always packed with passengers & that is an observational fact!!

Stopping the 33/33A bus service would not only affect our village but also our neighbouring villages of Quinton, Roade, Ashton, Hanslope, Wootton, and Grange Park all of which are serviced by these two buses!

I would therefore like the Council to reconsider their proposed cuts to Our Bus Service & Understand what devastating impact it would have for the residents of all the affected villages if we lost this most vital service.

We as villagers pay our council taxes the same as those that live in the town. We would expect to receive a decent level of service to our villages as we also contribute towards the towns' financial costs.....

SAVE OUR BUS SERVICE - LIFELINE FOR VILLAGERS - DONT CUT VILLAGERS OFF FROM CIVILISATION (ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG & OLD)!

Constituent 38

I would like to express my concern over the possible proposed cuts to our bus service in Hartwell.

I would like to point out the detrimental impact cutting the bus service to our village would have on the residents of Hartwell Village.

- The residents who rely on this vital service to enable them to get a bus to doctors' appointments, pick up prescriptions. As we have no doctors' surgery in our village many young and elderly use the buses to get to the next village where the surgery is. If the buses stopped then this would also put undue pressure on the local surgeries as doctors would have to home visit patients as they have way of getting down to the surgery themselves. This would lead to over worked doctors, even longer waiting times to see a doctor as those we have would be having to drive around seeing sick patients!
- If you cut our bus service out how are residents who do not drive living in the village going to get to work? Will they have to give up their jobs?
- Many residents from the village rely on the buses to get to town in both Northampton and Milton Keynes for Shopping/Banking! How are they supposed to be able to do this when no buses will be coming to the village???

Constituent 39

I object to the removal of the 33/33a Bus Route for the following reasons:-

I live in Hartwell village. To remove the bus service will be detrimental to the residents of the village who can't drive. How are we supposed to get anywhere?

The older generation rely on the bus to get to the Dr's hospital and for social reasons.

We have no pharmacy or Doctors in the village so cannot walk to them. For those that can't drive a bus is essential.

People use the bus to get to the train station which in turn saves more cars on the road meaning it is more economical and greener as no bus will mean more cars which in turn means more pollution.

For those that cannot drive a bus is essential for them to get around. You will be alienating and cutting off our village.

Students and pupils use the bus to get to school and college. They cannot drive as too young so how are they expected to get there.

No thought has gone into the removal of the bus service. It is extremely important for our village. In other areas they have more buses and facilities whereas we have none. You should not alienate those that can't drive. We have many older people who use the bus to get around and to get to places for a social life. Please do not cancel the bus service.

Constituent 40

I am concerned that Northamptonshire County Council have plans to remove the bus subsidy from the 33/33A bus service which will most likely cause it to be stopped. As this is the only bus passing through Ashton it would mean disabled persons such as myself are unable to leave the village. When I use the bus I estimate that approx. 30% of people using it are disabled with the majority of others being elderly.

As the current subsidy provided is small (40p) each journey even with my disabled bus pass I would be happy to pay this in order to keep the bus, or even to pay the full fare. Surely the disability discrimination act should protect vulnerable people from becoming isolated. As our local MP I am asking you to intervene in order that we may keep our transport provision. Even a reduced service would be better than none. I am sorry to trouble you with this but I feel strongly about this issue. Our local Parish Council while concerned are largely complacent. (They all drive). As for the County council they did not even bother to reply to my email.

ROUTE 87

Constituent 41

We would like you to be aware of the importance of the 87 bus service to us. It travels between Northampton and Towcester serving people living in several villages between. For many elderly people it is the only way to reach shops, doctors and Northampton hospital.

I use it to reach Northampton where I work. I travelled to work with 3 others who could not drive their cars either because of injuries or their car was out of service. My husband was needing the car to do work elsewhere. Two of our sons and their families live and work in Northampton so the 87 bus is the way to reach them if we are unable to drive.

If Northampton County Council decide to cut this valuable service many older people will have to make a decision to move nearer to a town (if they can!) We enjoy living in Pattishall which is a great community. We thank Northampton CC for all their aid towards a great library, bus passes and the care of a good council.

Constituent 42

I write as an elderly resident of the Northampton village of Pattishall to air my concerns about reports that Northampton County Council is proposing to cut subsidies on certain rural bus routes, and in particular route 87.

As driving becomes more difficult for me I have become increasingly dependent on the local bus service and I now rely on it to be able to visit Northampton from our rural village. This would be impossible for me now without the bus.

I know that the service is also vital for other local residents, especially the elderly, and anything that threatens the route is of enormous concern to those of us that depend on it.

Constituent 43

I have read with pleasure your article in the recent edition of the Around Pattishall magazine showing that you take a real interest in the affairs of the Towcester area and the wellbeing of its residents.

It is because of this that I feel you would be very willing to support our wish to retain the extremely valuable Bus No. 87 that runs between Northampton and Towcester and through several villages on the way.

There are increasing numbers of people unable to drive or who are unable to own a car and this includes young people as well as the elderly. There are often young mothers to be seen on the bus with children in pushchairs, some for shopping but others, perhaps more importantly to attend appointments at the Medical Centre. For those members of the community who already feel isolated this bus service is essential to help them to be out and about and be more active, perhaps to visit the library or just to meet friends for a cup coffee.

For all of these reasons and probably more I and many others would be very grateful if you would be kind enough to petition on our behalf to retain Bus No. 87.

Constituent 44

I am writing to you to express my concern at the proposal to stop bus subsidies to rural bus routes across South Northants, which I can see will result in these services being withdrawn.

The bus I use is the number 87, mainly to go to and from Towcester and into Northampton. I do still drive but try to use the bus service as much as possible to support the community. I am now retired I would like to think these important life lines will be there to ensure local people; the young, the elderly, disabled, pregnant and nursing mothers etc. can get to where they need to be as conveniently as possible. If there is not a bus service then these people will be severely impacted and leave the communities as a whole isolated.

Please can I ask you to make representations to Northampton County Council on our behalf and try to secure additional funding from Government for these important bus routes?

Constituent 45

I understand that Northampton County Council are considering cutting subsidies on certain bus routes, including the above. I live in Pattishall and use this service, as do many other elderly people. Many have no other way to get to Towcester and Northampton and it makes a real difference to their lives to be able to do so. (We have no shops and the pub is closed.)

Also young college students and people getting to work would be badly affected if the bus was stopped or severely restricted.

I do hope you will do all you can to influence the Council not to withdraw their subsidies to the bus service.

Constituent 46

I write to express my concern that Northamptonshire County Council are looking to cut costs which may result in the loss of the No 87 bus service and to ask for your assistance to ensure that this is not the case.

The bus service is vital to village communities, not every household has the luxury of a car, let alone two and as there are no village shops or amenities a trip to Towcester or Northampton is something of a necessity.

It is not only the elderly or parents and children who use the bus service, I use it for getting to and from work and many young people use the bus for transport to college.

The bus service currently operates on a two to three hourly service, any less than this would be severely detrimental to our village community.

I hope that I can count on your support to voice opinions to ensure that this service is not lost.

Constituent 47

Please include this email in your letters and emails in support on retaining the number 87 bus service between Northampton and Towcester.

My wife and I regularly use the service to both Northampton and Towcester for shopping, especially as the Parish does not have any shops. We also use the service to travel to entertainment in Northampton and supporting the Northampton Saints, and last but not least for travelling to the train station in Northampton. Over the years we have lost every facility in the village and the loss of the bus service would be the final straw.

COUNTY CONNECT

Constituent 48

I write to express my concern about proposed cuts/reductions to Northamptonshire's County Connect service.

As a long-term resident of Greatworth I have over the years witnessed a progressive reduction in any form of public transport in the villages and rural communities of the county. I personally make only occasional use of County Connect as I am fortunate enough to be able to drive still but I am one of an aging population for whom this option will not always be possible. Besides, I know there is a significant number of villagers - in every age group - for whom this minimal bus service is **INDISPENSABLE**.

Where is the concern for those who are attempting to live as full and independent a life as they can from their own homes in non-urban areas? I urge you to voice my and many other similar opinions against any proposed cuts to our County Connect service.

Constituent 49

County Connect, a bus service that serves a large area of Northamptonshire has contacted all of its Northants customers, including myself, who live in rural areas and have no other means of reaching shopping, medical and financial services, let alone the ability to visit friends, has told us that their services in your county will shortly be terminated due to lack of governmental financial support. This will put up to 3000 people at a very serious disadvantage - mainly the elderly.

I ask you as the MP who represents us to do your best to guarantee the ESSENTIAL services that this company provides.

I would very much welcome your comments - not least because those of us who voted for you are almost all conservative voters.

Constituent 50

I have been aware of the situation regarding NCC's budget for a while now but I hadn't previously realised it has been funded less than other comparable councils. I have signed the petition about reviewing the funding for Northamptonshire run by the Daventry Express and appreciate the fact that you and other MPs have met a minister regarding this.

This affects me personally, as I have ME and am unable to drive much due to fluctuating health. I use the County Connect bus service which is a lifeline for me and many other pensioners and others in the SNC area. If bus subsidies are cut then County Connect would definitely go as far as I can see, and we will be stranded. Taxis are £24 return to Towcester currently, which is a very large proportion of a pensioner's budget, or mine.

Constituent 51

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ROUTE 12

Constituent 52

Can you please explain the inexplicable decision to stop the 12 coming down Hilldrop Road, along Rowtree Road and then returning to Clannell Road via Hill Farm Rise?

How could this be chopped only to be replaced by diverting two other buses?? It makes no sense whatsoever and denies us at this end of East Hunsbury a proper, consistent and reliable service. None of it seems to make any sense whatsoever; using two different bus routes where one other previously served sensibly.

Thank heavens I do no longer have to take a bus for work or other regular appointments, but I dare say there are others who currently do have to.

ROUTE 86

Constituent 53

I would like to express my worry and dismay at the proposal to remove the subsidies for buses in the Northamptonshire area.

I personally rely on the 86 bus (run by Uno) that services villages between Towcester and Northampton.

If this bus is cancelled, I will no longer have a way to get to work. I am a single parent that works 40 hours per week in Blisworth. I live in Roade and would have to pay extortionate amounts of money for a taxi to and from work without the 86 bus!

My son is 16 and would also need this bus when he starts college next year. There are no other early buses to allow school and college students to catch connecting buses to get to their destination.

I am shocked that this has even been considered as these cuts will mean people are trapped in villages without being able to get to doctors surgeries, chemists, family, friends and work.

I am very good at my job and do not want to give up my career and all my knowledge of my industry because the people that do not drive have been snubbed.

This is causing me a huge anxiety and stress with little time to even raise funds enough to learn to drive. Being a single parent, I already struggle!

I wish you to consider my request along with many other villagers to not cut the very necessary and needed buses.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Constituent 54

It has come to my attention that on the 22nd February, a vote will be taken, and that will likely stop the funding that supports buses in Northamptonshire.

I am surprised at the black and white approach being taken to this consideration and fear that yet again a spreadsheet exercise will result in the inconvenience, despair and concern for many people. Again, we as a society appear to be showing a lack of compassion, thought or consideration. I fear the current political elite are slowly, but surely, dismantling the community elements of our wonderful country.

I am fortunate, I drive, earn a sufficient wage so that I can keep up with the increasing costs of owning and running a car, and unless unlucky will continue to be able to for the foreseeable. This is not the case for everybody, in particular those on lower incomes, without driving licences, or the elderly.

Please, when considering such cuts, take into consideration those less fortunate. I know the people reading this have pressures piled on from above to try and manage the country's finances, however, making people isolated, remote and unable to travel, is a quite callous act. It is cold and hurtful.

Imagine now, a single mother, no doctor in the village, with the only viable option of getting to the local doctor via a bus. Talk of scrapping this service will bring untold anguish on this person. Or an elderly person, who uses the service once a week, to enable them to do their shopping. Your proposal is abandoning the very people that most require the service you are employed, on taxpayer money, to provide. There are also people in our village who use the bus in order to get to work, again imagine their worries at the moment thinking about how they are going to manage this if the decision is to stop the service.

Please, before doing this, consider how you would feel if you, or a member of your family who was less fortunate relied on the bus service in order to run their life, and then consider it gone.

I have used the service, not frequently, but have. It is a good service, even for me, a car owner. I was pleasantly surprised how many people use the service. We live in a community without a taxi company and therefore the option to catch a bus to MK or Northampton is a good viable one. I have two daughters, of which one has used on her own and with friends, and will likely increasingly use the service. Without it, I will therefore have to drive to and from MK/Northampton twice (on each occasion she wants to go); now multiply that by every passenger having to try and find a lift. I would have thought that an environmental impact should be undertaken too. It does not make sense to force us all onto roads in separate vehicles.

It seems MK will continue funding part of the route, but Northamptonshire not; yet another postcode lottery. Finally, it has also come to my attention that provision of a bus pass for the elderly is required, yet a provision of a bus is not. Yet again we are therefore at the luck of the national postcode lottery.

Constituent 55

I understand that you are thinking of reducing or stopping the above bus routes. I would urge you to listen to the villagers who use this bus route on a regular basis. My daughter relies on this bus to meet friends in Northampton and Milton Keynes and especially uses it to get to and from school!

Changing or removing this service would be disastrous to the older generation who have no other means to leave the villages and towns the route runs through. We as a community should be encouraging the use of public transport instead of taking it away, we should be including the elderly instead of alienating them and we should be supporting the non-driving community instead of punishing them – please help to save this service.

Constituent 56

We had taken in recent years to using the bus service into the town very frequently, the half hourly service allowed quick trips to and fro when necessary with no need for parking or driving. However since the 'new' service was introduced the service became more unreliable, after all it was coming a greater distance and more liable to delay. Now suddenly we find ourselves with only ONE bus an hour, yet no.12 still carries on as before.

As a consequence of all this we now find that instead of taking the bus into the town we have now reverted to taking our car, far more reliable and no long waits. I also believe that we are now not going into the town as often as previously. This is not I am sure what is wanted, when more and more we are being encouraged to use public transport and visit the town for our shopping.

Also we are now denied using the bus to and from our doctors' surgery at Penvale Park.

Constituent 57

PLEASE WILL YOU HELP TO SAVE OUR BUS
IT IS A LIFE LINE TO US, BECAUSE WE
HAVE NO SHOPS AND WE NEED TO GET
FOOD
ALSO PEOPLE NEED IT TO GET TO
WORK & COLLEGE
SOME PEOPLE ARE IN THERE
EIGHTIES AND HAVE NO CAR

Constituent 58

Please find a copy of a letter sent to South Northants Council. On reading you will find we have a major problem with transport to and from our village. Please take up this fight to keep our only service going.

On Behalf of all the elderly and dis-abled people of Kings Sutton.

Constituent 59

Having attended Quinton Village Meeting last night in respect of NCC proposed Budget Cuts to the above service at Quinton, it has been explained to our residents that the bus maybe axed from the end of the financial year, commencing April next year.

I have lived in this village for over 51 years and we have always maintained a bus service for the people. I personally would be very badly affected by this suggestion as I do not drive, there is NO SHOP, NO POST OFFICE, NO PHARMACY, NO DRS., IN SHORT NO FACILITIES WHATSOEVER and therefore is a preposterous idea that would be dramatic for me. How would people attend hospital appointments! General Health should always be maintained. I have no other means of travelling backwards and forwards. It will prevent me from living independently. Wootton and Roade have lots of buses to choose from and have NO NEED AT ALL for the bus to go there. The bus route is only a half a mile or one mile from the main road, so it does not go far out of the way. What is the point of supplying a bus pass for 5 years if you are unable to use it! If we had 2 or 3 buses in and out a day instead of 4 it would possibly be sufficient, in at 8 a.m., 10 a.m. and 12 mid-day or 2 p.m, back at 12.30 p.m., 2.30 p.m. and 5 p.m.

We do now live in the 21st Century and this would certainly be a backwood step cutting out the bus service leaving village residents stranded.. We need to have a greater sustainable village community. When the people become elderly and unable to drive, what will happen then! This in turn will cause total isolation of our society and people will stop living here. HOW ARE WE GOING TO ARRIVE AT THE SHOPS? It is vital that we have public transport to access financial services and facilities.

Would you please think again as to your budget and NOT cut out the general public! We do pay expensive Council Tax. I have never defaulted in my payments.

Constituent 60

I am writing to request that you intervene in the removal of the Whittlebury bus link to our small Northamptonshire village. The bus was removed without any consultation.

The village has no shop, doctor's surgery, dentist etc. and therefore everyone, young and old, has to travel out of the village to accomplish the normal day to day chores. In addition, Whittlebury Hall and Spa including the golf course and grounds is a large employer of low paid staff who need to get to work by public transport. County Connect (the NCC 'dial a bus's) is not very practical and really does not serve the community adequately.

The village has a 300+ petition for the return of the bus service, plus letters of support from Whittlebury Hall etc.

The bus previously arrived at Silverstone and then went to Whittlebury and then onto to Towcester. Now it goes from Silverstone straight to Towcester. It can't be a matter of time as the bus has often waited at Silverstone for 5 minutes or so when I have been on it.

I have been informed by the Parish Council that a representative of Stagecoach will be attending the next PC meeting on the 20th April at 7.30pm.

I, and the villagers would like you, on our behalf, to approach Stagecoach to reinstate, or at least partially reinstate, the service to Whittlebury.