

## PE1581/W

Petitioner letter of 16 February 2017

Please find detailed below our latest response to Petition PE1581. This complements the original petition (and supplementary responses) which have been lodged with the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee.

We were particularly interested in some of the points made in the COSLA response to the petition.

*“A number of libraries now provide books in e-reader formats such as “Kindle” where books are downloaded, this means people who use these services don’t need to physically visit a library.”*

We were most intrigued by this statement as our own evidence would suggest that the take up of e-lending within school libraries is extremely low. There are a number of reasons for this including costs, licensing restrictions, especially in regards to the lending of books on Kindle devices and restrictions within schools on Wi-Fi availability. We would also ask who COSLA believes is choosing the appropriate stock available to borrow on the e-devices, and who is enabling the children to use the devices. We would be very keen to see the evidence that relates to school libraries that COSLA have based this statement on.

*“A National School Library Strategy which calls for the ring fencing of school library spend and sets a central hierarchy of priorities would put other areas of local authority services under even greater pressure. It would also further undermine the role of locally elected Councillors in making budget decisions and would be a further erosion of local democracy.”*

We are greatly concerned by the statement that sees COSLA position the petition as a political football to further its grievance with national government in regards to budgets. To suggest that the creation of a National School Library Strategy would be a ‘further erosion of local democracy’ is nonsense and we are disappointed that the level of debate on the issue has reached this point. We believe there is a requirement for a National Strategy, enforced by the Scottish Government, to ensure the positive impact a professionally staffed school library can have on attainment and curriculum delivery.

The discussion about the petition at the committee meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> December also raised a number of points, in particular what appeared to be a lack of knowledge by committee members on what a modern school library and school librarian provide and offer. We would recommend that members of the committee visit a school library and talk with a school librarian in order to allow themselves to be better informed on this petition. We would be happy to facilitate this.

We note our disappointment that ADES has yet to respond to the petition and remain concerned about the speed of progress in regards to the petition. We look forward to receiving the result of the committee's considerations and the next course of action.