

Community Centres and Libraries will not reopen immediately

The report brought before the Policy and Sustainability Committee today simply said there are many challenges in reopening the community centres and libraries right away, and that there cannot be a return to normal.

Although the facilities have been drop off points for some essential services for vulnerable people like children who have been in hospital, or families requiring food parcels, they have been closed since March.

A further decision will be taken in September when another report with detailed plans on reopening the vital facilities is prepared.

The report considered today stated: "The reopening of any Council buildings, including community centres and libraries, and their continued, ongoing safe use will require a significant level of support from facilities management and some investment in safety equipment. The Council has prioritised the reopening of schools and to that end facilities management resources are concentrated on pre-opening preparation and ongoing schools support after opening."

Whenever libraries are opened to the public again, it will

likely be in three phases with staff returning to Central, Craigmillar, Fountainbridge, Gilmerton, McDonald Road, Morningside, Kirkliston, and Stockbridge all in the first phase. In the second phase some libraries will reopen for essential services such as hearing aid batteries, Hey Girls sanitary items and with priority access to computers for Universal Credit applications.

It is not until the third phase that activities such as BookBug will recommence.

Some, like the Goodtrees Neighbourhood Centre, are not within the direct control of the council, and are apparently being discussed at a meeting of the Council Incident Management Team on Friday.

A council officer said they will be working gradually to reopen libraries and community centres to ensure that they are as safe as possible, but that The Scottish Government has not required that any youth work is carried on within council buildings.

The council has 30 community centres and 28 libraries, along with mobile library services, a prison library and a hospital library.

Cllr McVey claimed that Edinburgh is no different from any other council in Scotland, but Cllr Hal Osler pointed out that Perth and Kinross Council have had libraries open again since July. The AK Bell Library there has new opening hours but has been open since 18 July. Blairgowrie has been open since 25 July.

Cllr McVey said the coalition have included youth work in that process. He said: "It is crucial that this is in the mix of what will be conducted in libraries."

A deputation by Goodtrees Neighbourhood Centre had missed the deadline, but they will no doubt be relieved that they and

Magdalene Community Centre will be discussed by the council tomorrow.