

Midlothian Council abolished library fines

Library fines for late returns have been abolished by Midlothian Council after they were branded “outdated” and a barrier to making the service accessible.

Councillors unanimously backed a call from officials for an end to fines for late returns as well as charges for renting CDs and DVDs.

Annabel Cavaroli, the council’s acting customer services manager, told elected members that fines “punish those in our communities who need our services the most”.

She said that scrapping the fines and additional charges at a time when the council was opening a new library at Danderhall would be in keeping with the kind of caring service the local authority wanted to provide.

In a report to councillors on the proposals, she said that fines and charges had reduced as services were closed during the pandemic and it was time to get rid of them permanently.

She said: “Fines are an outdated and old-fashioned concept which do not fit with the modern library service that Midlothian Council provides.

“They can be a deterrent to library use and are a form of social inequality which negatively impact on those in our communities who are in the greatest need of our support.

“Charges are currently levied for the hire of CDs and adult DVDs and again act as a barrier for those who cannot afford them.

“The role of libraries is to provide access to information, resources and learning, not prevent it.”

Councillors were told that the income generated from fines and charges was annually budgeted at £7,000 but never reached that target.

The loss of income generated will be absorbed into the service costs in the future.

Councillors unanimously agreed to abolish fines and charges.

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

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