

Scrutiny Committee B

13th December 2017

Leisure/Culture Scrutiny Group

Purpose of Report: Progress report

Since the last meeting of Scrutiny Committee B on 12th October 2017 the following work has been undertaken:

Public Library Standards Report (undertaken by way of email scrutiny)

This piece of work was undertaken by way of email correspondence between Members of the Leisure/Culture Scrutiny Group who provided the Lead Member with comments. The Lead Member prepared scrutiny observations which were provided to Cabinet when the report was discussed on the 5th December 2017. A copy of the observations are attached.

The Lead Member will provide a verbal update from the Cabinet meeting.

Report contact: Liz Patterson, Scrutiny Officer

Contact details: 01597 826980, elizabeth.patterson@powys.gov.uk

Sources/background papers:

Membership:

County Councillors: **P Roberts** (Chair of Scrutiny Committee B and Lead Member)

G Breeze, H Hulme, D R Jones, E Roderick, G Thomas

Leisure/Culture Scrutiny Working Group Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on 5th December 2017

The Leisure/Culture Scrutiny Working Group were asked by Joint Chairs to undertake e – scrutiny of the Welsh Public Library Standards draft Cabinet report.

The Group makes the following observations:

Whilst the Annual assessment can be welcomed as a sign of a service in a stable state it also offers no room for complacency. Despite Powys meeting 17 of the core indicators in full its benchmark position in respect of other Welsh councils deteriorated on almost every measure where there was comparative data.

Of particular concern are the following areas which should be monitored closely over the next six months

- QI8 Availability of up to date reading material
- QI 12a supply of requests available in 7 days
- QI 14 b % Expenditure on information resources
- QI7 Attendance at events
- QI2 Customer satisfaction ratings

Whilst many of these failings are attributed to one-off factors outside the control of the service there is no scope for complacency at this time particularly in the field of acquisitions where performance in respect of choice of books is the worst in Wales.

An additional concern is the limited use of library facilities in holding related events. Scrutiny would encourage the service to look at the programmes of community events run by third sector organisations in school holidays and would encourage the development of similar initiatives within the library service.

Finally the impact of different ways of accessing library books including the all Wales Library ebooks initiative and the ability to reserve books from any library via the internet are not explicitly monitored by this report. As these are clearly likely to impact on some

of the other statistics we would encourage the service to lobby for the inclusion of suitable performance indicators in the standards for 2018 onwards.

So in summary Scrutiny welcome this report but would express grave concerns about the long term ability for the Council to deliver a comprehensive service if acquisition levels are not maintained and genuine efficiencies delivered by collocating with other services are not realised.

Membership of the Leisure/Culture Scrutiny Group:

County Councillors: **P Roberts** (Chair of Scrutiny Committee B and Lead Member)
G Breeze, H Hulme, D R Jones, E Roderick, G Thomas