



People Scrutiny Committee

9th June 2016

Cultural Services Scrutiny Group

Purpose of Report: Progress report

Since the last meeting of People Scrutiny Committee on 17th March 2016 the report of Cultural Services Scrutiny Group on the Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17 Annual Assessment Report 2014-15 was submitted to Cabinet on 22nd March 2016. The Cabinet response to this report was received at Cabinet on 12th April 2016.

A copy of the response is attached at Appendix A.

Report contact: Liz Patterson, Scrutiny Officer

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Sources/background papers:

Membership: (pre May 2016)

County Councillors: D. R. Jones, M. Dorrance

J. M. Williams, J. Shearer, Dr G. Bowker, G. Jones and T. Turner.

Covering: Archives

Libraries (inclu eBooks)

Theatres

Youth Strategy

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET EXECUTIVE

12th April 2016

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Graham Brown
Portfolio Holder for Commissioning & Procurement

SUBJECT: Welsh Public Library Standards: Cultural Services
Scrutiny Group recommendations on Powys Annual
Report 2014-15

REPORT FOR: Information

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to consider the Cultural Services Scrutiny Group's observations and recommendations on the performance of the library service and the Annual Report from the Welsh Government for the year 2014-2015, under the Welsh Public Library Standards (5th Framework), and to give information on progress with regard to the recommendations.
- 1.2 The Welsh Government has a supervisory and monitoring role in relation to the 22 Library Authorities in Wales.
- 1.3 Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) were first developed in 2002. The period 2014-2015 is covered by a fifth performance framework, "Libraries making a difference". Under this framework, the Authority's performance was measured against a revised set of 18 Core entitlements and 16 key Performance Indicators, which includes impact and outcome measures for the first time, in order to reveal the wide range of benefits that result from public library use, such as improvements to people's literacy skills, digital skills and health and wellbeing.
- 1.4 The Standards are intended to help define the responsibilities of library authorities in providing a "comprehensive and efficient" service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The performance framework aims to:
- enable the Minister for Culture and Sport to fulfil the statutory requirements of the 1964 Act in respect of superintending the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service by local authorities;
 - provide a robust assessment of the performance of library services;

- have clear links to the Welsh Government's agenda, to ensure credibility across local government in Wales;
- incorporate outcome measures to show the benefits of using libraries;
- act as a driver for improvements to library services and local communities

1.5 For the year 2014-15, Powys Library Service met 17 of the 18 core entitlements, and partially achieved the 18th. The new framework has 16 quality indicators, of which 7 have targets; for those with targets, Powys met 3 in full, 3 in part, and failed to meet one. The key performance indicators of library visits per thousand population (actual and virtual) were well above the Welsh median, proving increased benefit to Powys citizens. The full report is attached at Appendix A.

2. **Proposal**

2.1 It is proposed that the People Scrutiny Committee's observations and recommendations on the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report on Powys Library Service 2014-15 are duly considered and actioned in forward planning, so that the library service strives to maintain performance, and seeks to address as far as possible the areas which do not currently meet Welsh Government's standard.

2.2 **Recommendation 1: Recommended to the Portfolio Holder that arrangements are put in place to ensure that the Library Service Strategy is available on the Powys County Council website prior to 31st March 2016.**

This recommendation has been achieved in full, which means that Powys Library Service will meet all 18 core entitlements in the report for 2015-16 (<http://www.powys.gov.uk/en/libraries/join-the-library/library-policies/> copy attached as appendix B)

2.3 **Recommendation 2: Those libraries without a Reading Group be encouraged to explore the potential to develop a Reading Group in conjunction with volunteers.**

Good progress is being made towards this recommendation, and new reading groups for adults have opened this year in Llandrindod, Llanwrtyd and Rhayader libraries. Reader development activities for adults have taken place in all libraries during 2015-16, so Quality Indicator 3, opportunities for individual development, will have been met in full in the next report to Welsh Government.

2.4 **Recommendation 3: Effort is made to ensure that the requirements of online access are met both in libraries and on the mobile fleet.**

The target number of devices which allow the public to access the internet or networked digital content (9 per 10,000 population) in branch libraries will have been met for 2015/16 with the addition of tablet devices for educational purposes at Llandrindod Library, as part of the Welsh Government capital grant for community learning libraries.

In addition, the new mobile library received in March 2016 (funded by a £100,000 grant from Welsh Government's community learning libraries capital scheme in 2015-16) is internet enabled, and it is intended to trial internet use and broadband access around the north of the county during 2016-17. As broadband facilities gradually improve, it should be possible to achieve online access on mobile libraries as well as in branches in the future.

2.5 Recommendation 4: that co-location be encouraged where an opportunity arises, particularly with schools working with the 21st century schools' agenda.

The library service is actively developing co-location opportunities across the county, as part of its transformation agenda and to contribute to a savings target of £250,000 under the mid-term financial plan – see Appendix C for a list of potential co-locations which were being developed in Jan 2016. Public libraries are being planned as part of the new primary schools in Talgarth and Hay, and discussions are taking place with the Schools Section over developments in other areas as part of the 21st schools agenda.

The potential for other services to share library service buildings is also under consideration, for example discussions are under way with Job Centre Plus in Ystradgynlais.

The library service continues to work with Property Services to develop best use of premises, and libraries are listed as venues for other council and health authority staff to use, under the agile working strategy.

2.6 Recommendation 5: When considering budget cuts that the library service is not disproportionately affected to enable the service to continue to contribute to the local and national agenda

There can be no doubt that the library service will not have performed so well in 2015-16, in terms of WPLS Quality Indicator 6, which measures visitor numbers and loans; from April 2015, there was a reduction of opening hours by 20% across the county, and in mobile library visits from fortnightly to monthly, in order to achieve £350,000 savings, and this will have impacted on usage figures. Powys has for many years been above the Welsh average for visitors and loans.

Following the spending freeze towards the end of 2015-16, it is unlikely that stock replenishment targets will have been met (WPLS Quality Indicator 8, up to date reading material), and with further reductions in

staffing hours and levels from April 2015 (WPLS Quality Indicator 13, staffing levels and qualifications), the required level of 3.6 full time equivalents per 10,000 population will not be reached.

Results of the adult customer satisfaction survey which took place in November 2015 (see appendix D) show that the library service makes an important contribution to local and national agendas:

- 76% of respondents agreed that the library had helped them to learn something new
- 91% stated that the library helps them to feel better
- 90% feel that the library makes them feel part of their community
- 99% find the library an enjoyable, safe and friendly environment
- 97% said that their library makes a difference to their life

“At a time when I am long term unemployed it is a place of friends, activities, education humour and welcome.” Library user Nov 2015

“I know we are lucky to have a Library, with all the cuts etc and I think its a much needed part of our community. I use it for loan of books, access to computers, to encourage my children to read and take part in activities and to find out about local events: I would say that is definitely of benefit to my life and my children's - thank you.” Library user Nov 2015

However, comments also show that the reductions in the service are making an impact on residents:

“The Library is the only social outlet I have and I find that now the Library closes on a Wednesday that I feel isolated.” Library user Nov 2015

It is important that as we seek to transform the library service for a sustainable future, we do not lose sight of these important outcomes for our residents, but instead seek to develop them in new ways, accessing new funding opportunities and working with new partners.

3. One Powys Plan and Powys 2020 vision

3.2 As demonstrated above, the Library Service plays an important strategic role in delivering current corporate and multi-agency objectives, and in particular contributes strongly to the achievement of a range of Powys One Plan and 2020 vision outcomes such as literacy, skills and learning, digital inclusion, addressing poverty, and health and well-being:

- **Supporting people in the community to lead fulfilled lives:** the local library provides a neutral space for all members of the public to enjoy in a safe and inclusive atmosphere, using services which benefit their

skills and learning, personal health and wellbeing, and ability access to wider council and democratic processes

- **Developing the economy:** provision of good quality hardware and internet access (including wi-fi) enables residents to access government and other online services (e.g. to file VAT returns online, and access the HMRC site), supporting small businesses to develop skills, and assisting job seekers to find and apply for employment opportunities
- **Improving learner outcomes for all, minimising disadvantage:** through free provision at the point of access, libraries continue to support learners of all ages and abilities locally, through provision of up-to-date learning materials and facilities, promoting equality and addressing the poverty agenda.
- **Stronger, safer and economically viable communities** – libraries bring people together in Powys so they feel that they matter, belong and can contribute to their community.
- **Integrated health and adult social care** – older people are helped to lead fulfilled lives within their communities, carers and families have a safe place to go and receive support, and mental health and wellbeing is improved through mental stimulation and bibliotherapy schemes, all contributing to “Powys citizens are supported and empowered to lead active and healthier lives”.
- **Transforming learning and skills** – resources and facilities help children and young people, and their families to achieve their potential, as well as supporting students of all ages. Jobseekers in particular make heavy use of library resources.
- **Financially balanced and fit for purpose public services** – the library service is commissioned to deliver a face-to-face gateway to council services and the democratic process through the library+ project, and also works in partnership with many other statutory and voluntary sector organisations such as PtLHB (Bookstart, health promotion materials/activities), Workers Education Association for computer training and access, and local history societies.

4. Options Considered / Available

- 4.1 To do nothing to address the issues highlighted
- 4.2 To note and continue to work towards the recommendations of the Cultural Services Scrutiny Group and the requirements of the Welsh Public Library Standards, striving to meet further budgetary targets in innovative and creative ways which continue to provide beneficial outcomes for residents

5. Preferred Option

- 5.1 To note the recommendations of the Cultural Services Scrutiny Group on the Welsh Public Library Standards report in order to inform forward planning of the Library Service and aid compliance with the Welsh

Public Library Standards going forward into the remainder of this framework period.

6. Local Member(s)

N/A

7. Support Services (Legal, Finance, HR, ICT, BPU)

7.1 Legal - The Professional Lead-Legal agrees with the recommended proposal in this report which recognises that a comprehensive and efficient service should be achieved by our library service despite financial difficulties

7.2 Finance - Agree to move forward as per paragraph 4.2 above.

8. Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

9. Corporate Communications

9.1 No proactive communications action required

10. Statutory Officers

10.1 The Strategic Director Resources (S151 Officer) notes the comments made by finance

10.2 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows:

11. Members' Interests

11.1 The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

Recommendation to Council		Reason for Recommendation:	
That the recommendations of the Cultural Services Scrutiny Group on the outcomes in Welsh Government's Annual Report on the Library Service 2014-15 in Appendix A to this report be duly noted, and considered in forward planning.		To aid compliance with the requirements of the Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-2017.	
Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	Y	Within Budget:	Y
Relevant Local Member(s):		N/A	

Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Kay Thomas
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	With immediate effect

Contact Officer Name:	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
Kay Thomas	01597 826864	01597 826872	kay.thomas@powys.gov.uk

Background Papers used to prepare Report:

['Libraries making a difference: the fifth quality framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-2017', Welsh Government, 2014](#)

Appendices:

[Appendix A - Powys Library Service Annual Report 2014-15](#)

[Appendix B Powys library strategy document updated..pdf](#)

[Appendix C Library co-locations update Jan 2016.docx](#)

[Appendix D Customer satisfaction survey results Nov 15.odt](#)