

Welsh Public Library Standards return 2015/16 – Powys Library Service

Statement about future direction:

During 2015/16, the year reported, the service was tasked with finding £350,000 of efficiency savings. Whilst savings of £310,000 were identified through reduction of opening hours, restructuring of the mobile library service, reduction in the bookfund, colocation of Llandrindod library and other measures, by Sept 2015, there was an outstanding target of £40,000 to be found. This is being tackled through a management/back office restructure, which will come into operation from the target date of 1st August 2016, due to unforeseen but unavoidable delays.

In the Powys County Council medium term financial plan 2016-19, the service has an efficiency savings target of £250,000, with £100,000 to be found in 17/18 and £150,000 in 18/19. Following discussion of options with informal cabinet in Feb 2016, the service is currently consulting with communities over the future delivery of 11 branch libraries, with a view to seeking community partnerships which will provide at least 50% of the local running costs. A major public consultation, including discussions with Town and Community Councils, schools and other community groups, is due to end on 3rd July 2016, and will be followed by a further report back to cabinet on the options which have come forward.

Co-location remains a key strategy in reducing running costs, and opportunities are being developed wherever possible, with some success. Other options continue to be explored, including trust or mutual status and the potential for external companies to be commissioned to deliver the service. The difficulty will be to achieve transformation and the required savings within the timescales, particularly when developing community partnerships. It is likely that if good progress cannot be achieved by a cut-off date (yet to be decided), then there may be no option but to close libraries.