

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

Cabinet

20 December 2016

REPORT AUTHOR: Place Scrutiny Group 1

**SUBJECT: Welsh Public Library Standards: Powys Annual Report
2015-16**

REPORT FOR: Information

The Place Scrutiny Committee, Working Group 1 have assessed the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report for Powys and make the following comments

- The report deals with 2015/16 which was the year opening hours were reduced by 20% and the mobile library service was reduced by 50%
- 17 of the 18 core entitlements have been met despite reductions to service and note that the remaining entitlement cannot be achieved due to lack of mobile signal to enable mobile libraries to satisfy connectivity requirements
- The working group were pleased to note that customer satisfaction remains high and the service continues to be well received
- Of the quality indicators the Group welcome the improvement over the previous year, with four indicators having been met in full, up from three the previous year, two having been partially met (three in the previous year) and one failed
- The level of expenditure on replacement books has not met the required level of £2180 per 1000 population and it was noted that this indicator had only been achieved by three authorities across Wales. However the rate of acquisitions per 1000 population has been achieved. This includes e-books and e-magazines which represent good value as the service is shared across Wales. As e-books develop the issue will be exacerbated and the Group suggests that representations should be made revise the formula.
- The Group remain concerned regarding ever increasing demands on library staff. The indicator relating to staffing levels has been partially met, in part due to the reductions in opening hours. It was noted that this was a trend across Wales and not particular to Powys. However, there are many extra demands on libraries and less library work being undertaken. When other services were first moved to libraries, there was some transfer of funds which supported the employment of additional part time staff in the main libraries. Ongoing savings and further cuts have increased the pressure on the service. The introduction of universal credit will also increase pressures on library staff. There was no doubt that library services were being affected by these increasing demands. Significant signposting is undertaken and a wide knowledge base is needed. The Group is concerned that the service is reaching its limit.

- The Group questioned whether there is sufficient commitment to the service to drive the library service forward and ensure modern standards are maintained. It was acknowledged that this could be achieved through an all Wales service contributing to efficiencies.
- The Group were of the opinion that our staff were being compromised by being asked to undertake too many duties. Whilst co-location is the way forward, the Authority must recognise that it could affect core library delivery. Services should not be moved to libraries without the appropriate infrastructure, including resources, having been put in place.
- The increasing use of volunteers was noted but it may not be appropriate for them to deal with some Council business
- The Group were further concerned at the long term impact on literacy of the cessation of the Book Runner service. They had been informed that there is data to show that there has been a reduction in borrowing by younger readers.

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Background Papers used to prepare Report:

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Commissioning and Procurement

Powys Library Service Annual Report 2015-16

Customer satisfaction survey results November 2015

Services available from your local library

Notes of Place Scrutiny Group 1 meeting - 29 November 2016