



Learning, Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on the Wales Public Library Standards

The Learning, Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee met on 18th January 2019 and considered the following documents:

The Learning, Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee thank Principal Librarian for attending scrutiny.

Observations:

Scrutiny welcome the opportunity to comment on the Annual Report from Welsh Government under the Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020.

Scrutiny are aware of the pressures that the Library service have been facing and the extensive work that has been undertaken to date to protect this service from the effects of the financial position that exist. The period that the report covers includes the time that there was a number of partnerships were entered into or moves arranged to enable the service to operate on a reduced budget.

The period also covers a move to the Wales Library Management Service which whilst resulting in savings to the service did impact on some of the measures which are reported (supply requests and acquisitions). Now that this move is complete the current year's figures will not be impacted on for this reason.

It is noted that one of the measures is difficult to meet in a sparsely populated rural area whilst wishing to operate an inclusive service (User attendance at library events). Consultation is current for the next Framework and it is suggested that the Library Service press for this measure to be amended to reflect a more inclusive definition of library event.

It is also noted that there are some measures that in the current financial climate are rarely and unlikely to be met (in particular relating to acquisitions) but that Cabinet should be mindful that an appropriate level of funding should be provided for the service to ensure that its offer remains attractive.

Recommendations:

| Scrutiny's Recommendation | Accept (plus Action and timescale) | Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale) | Reject (plus Rationale) |
|--|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <p>1. That the Library Service impress upon Welsh Government:</p> <p>a. the challenges experienced in a sparsely populated rural authority in meeting some of the quality indicators</p> <p>b. that given the low incidence of individuals with special requirements it is difficult to monitor this indicator without introducing a degree of stigma upon those individuals as the only way to run such events in areas of sparse population is to advertise them as an inclusive event.</p> | | | |
| <p>2. That attention is focussed on those measures that were adversely affected by the move during 2017/18 to the Library Management System (acquisitions, supply of requests and Welsh medium resources) during this period.</p> | | | |
| <p>3. Scrutiny are aware that the service are reviewing library service provision at present and Members will be briefed on any proposals in the near future.</p> | | | |

In accordance with Rule 7.27.2 the Cabinet is asked to provide a written response to the scrutiny report, including an action plan where appropriate, within 2 months i.e. by 15.03.19

Membership of the Learning, Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee present on 18th January 2019:

County Councillors: P Roberts (Chair), D R Jones, G Breeze, K W Curry, B Davies,
D O Evans, L George, E M Jones, D Jones-Poston, S McNicholas, D Selby and
R Williams