

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER DELEGATED DECISION**

**by**

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR PHYL DAVIES**

**(PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HIGHWAYS, ASSETS & RECYCLING)**

**AND**

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR RACHEL POWELL**

**(PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE & CULTURE)**

**February 2019**

**REPORT AUTHOR: Principal Librarian and Principal Lead, Museums,  
Archives & Information Management**

**SUBJECT: Co-location of library and museum, Welshpool**

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**REPORT FOR: Decision**

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**1. Summary**

1.1 Further to a Cabinet report of 18 December 2018, the purpose of this report is to review responses submitted through the public and staff consultations on the proposed colocation and integration of library and museum services within the current Powysland museum building in Welshpool, in order to make an informed decision on the future of the proposal.

1.2 The Cabinet report of 18 December 2018 approved the recommendation that delegated authority is given to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Assets and Recycling and the Director of Environment to make this decision.

1.3 The Director of Environment supports the recommendation that Welshpool Library co-locates with Powysland Museum at the current Powysland Museum building.

**2. Proposal**

2.1 The library and museum services have been investigating the proposal to co-locate and integrate service delivery in Welshpool from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 for the following reasons:

- To contribute towards the corporate strategic asset plan for Welshpool town
- To contribute towards reductions in the revenue budget for both services for 2019/20
- To provide a sustainable and long term future for both the museum and library in Welshpool

2.2 Public and staff consultation about the co-location proposal has brought forward many questions, concerns and suggestions from public and staff. This paper seeks to review all of the suggestions made, in order to decide on the future direction of the proposal.

2.3 The public consultation ran from 22 October – 25 November 2018, and, together with individual emails and a submission from the “Save Welshpool Library” supporters’ group, highlighted the following areas of concern:

- Alternative buildings were put forward for consideration, particularly for council staff, and there were requests to see conversion/adaptation costs, overall savings to be achieved by Powys County Council, and cost/benefit analysis of the proposals.
- Concern that the library was purpose built and substantially refurbished with Welsh Government capital in 2007/08, in order to be fit for purpose as a public library
- Perceived downgrading of museum and library service delivery, with negative impacts
- Concern about perceived lack of space within the Powysland Museum building to co-locate effectively and be able to maintain the range of facilities, resources, outcomes and activities currently provided by both services, or for people to enjoy their visits.
- Perceived lack of adequate arts/heritage/cultural facilities within Welshpool as a whole
- Concerns around parking and accessibility at Powysland Museum, particularly for the disabled

2.4 Detailed analysis of the public consultation is attached at Appendix A, with the response from the Save Welshpool Library supporters group attached at Appendix B.

2.5 The Library Service and Museum Service acknowledge and welcome the amount of responses received throughout the consultation, which have helped inform the recommendation of this report.

2.6 The survey showed that around 11% said the preference of respondents was co-location. 38% wanted a library to remain in Welshpool and the museum to close; 1% wanted the library to close and the museum remain. 50% choose “something else” – predominantly asking the Powys County Council to leave the library in its current location.

2.7 Emails, comments on social media, the document from Save Welshpool Library Group, and the petition signed by over 4000 largely called on the Powys County Council to leave the library in its current location.

2.8 In response to this; essentially unprecedented budget pressures on both the Library and Museum Services mean that leaving the library in its current building is not financially sustainable – essentially one or both would have to cease. The library service fully endorses the view of the Save Welshpool

Library group, about the wide ranging benefits of public library use. However, it does not agree that these benefits will be lost through co-location, as current provision can continue through flexible use of the available space (e.g. public access computers, class visits, children's activities, opportunities for social interaction).

2.9 Co-locating in one building, although reducing the space occupied by both services, means that the Powys County Council can maintain a museum and library service in Welshpool. Comments throughout all feed-back received showed that residents value and view both the museum and library as very important to Welshpool. Powys County Council acknowledges this and the only option which would deliver financial savings and keep the two services in Welshpool is to co-locate both in one building.

2.10 The Business Case submitted by Welshpool Town Council was also considered. Included in the "package" around several Powys County Council owned buildings in Welshpool was the proposal to take over the museum building and service and to run it via a Civic Pride Committee. With regards to the library they proposed providing space in the Town Hall on a 35-year lease.

2.11 The proposal does have some merit and fits in with Powys County Council's strategic vision of working with town/community councils and the community delivery programme.

2.12 However concerns about Town Council's proposals and ability to maintain Museum Accreditation and to deliver the necessary standards for collection care and management, both in the short and long term, were raised by service managers. It was felt that without the required level of professionalism, including the provision of qualified staff, the collection would be placed at significant risk. The Shire collection is noted as one of the most important historical and cultural assets for the county of Montgomeryshire.

2.13 There are similar significant concerns about the Town Council's understanding of the complexity and their ability to deliver a professional library service for the residents of Welshpool and surrounding catchment area, including national limitations on charges which can be made for use.

2.14 Welshpool Town Council proposed leasing space for the library in the Town Hall. However, Powys County Council is reviewing its own assets and is not seeking to increase its property portfolio through lease agreements.

2.15 The Town Council's Business Case also lacked clarity in its financial information, which did not show a realistic revenue budget for running the museum or library.

2.16 Alternative options considered for the library and/or museum are included in Appendix C. These were those put forward by respondents during the consultation period and include explanations why they have been ruled out.

2.17 Staff consultation has taken place under the Management of Change process, from 24<sup>th</sup> October – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Issues raised by the staff during the Management of Change consultation process mirrored those of the public, including:

- Perceived downgrading of services in Welshpool
- Negative impact on size of collections and space for service delivery, with perceived impact on ability to provide adequate or acceptable levels of service delivery, or maintain beneficial outcomes and contribution to Vision 2025, Museum Accreditation and Welsh Public Library standards, as well as for wide range of public to enjoy their visits
- Concern about suitable storage and/or disposal of museum artefacts
- Less central location, parking, lack of public transport and accessibility for disabled and for parents/carers with pushchairs (particularly triple buggies used by nursery group visits)
- Some health and safety concerns around lighting and flooring for likely usage levels
- Reduced staffing, with insufficient time and loss of expertise for curatorial work researching, making grant applications and preparing for new exhibitions
- Suggestions for building developments on either site to accommodate both services, and/or other locations for office staff were put forward, with requests to discuss with property colleagues

2.18 A site meeting was held between Portfolio Holders, senior staff from Powys County Council, and officers from Museums Archives and Libraries division of Welsh Government (MALD) on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018. After discussion MALD officers were satisfied with the proposal and supportive of a grant application to make further improvements to the location in 2020/21.

2.19 Additional papers which need consideration before concluding the decision about the co-location are the Impact Assessment (Appendix D), which has been reviewed and updated to reflect consultation results, and the analysis of alternative properties suggested (attached at Appendix E). This analysis of properties was carried out by expert colleagues in the Property Section of Powys County Council.

2.20 This concludes the responses and feedback to be reviewed before making any decision about proceeding with the co-location of the library and museum in Welshpool.

### **3. Current and Future Service Provision**

3.1 It is acknowledged the proposed co-location will reduce the amount of space occupied by both services. The range and number of activities however will be maintained providing good levels of service provision for both the museum and library.

3.2 There were over 36,300 visitors to Welshpool Library between April 2017 and March 2018. The visitor figures for 2017/18 are half of what figures were in 2007/08 (77,000)

3.3 Over 3,000 active borrowers, defined as library members who have borrowed library stock in the last 12 months at Welshpool Library.

3.4 65% of its stock has been borrowed at least once in the last twelve months, with stock just under 15,000 books at Welshpool Library. Stock levels will be reduced to around 10,000 books in the new facility, but book requests for stock held across the county can be processed quickly and easily.

3.5 2,130 Library+ Customer transactions for Powys County Council between April 2017 and March 2018 at Welshpool Library

3.6 In addition to its well-used public computer facilities and its important role as a Library+ point for Powys County Council customer services work, its suitability as a venue for individuals/local groups to gather makes it a great hub for the people of Welshpool and surrounding area. It provides a lifeline for vulnerable people who regard the Library as a safe haven. There is no reason that it should not continue to do so in the new location.

3.7 Again it is acknowledged that the museum will have reduced permanent exhibition space. The temporary exhibition space will move to the first floor in the facility in a newly refurbished area. The museum has an active temporary exhibition programme with displays on a wide variety of topics, and this will be maintained.

3.8 Visitor figures for the museum in 2017/18 was 7,522 with opening hours at 23 hours per week for 9 months of the year, and 32 hours per week for 3 months of the year. The museum will benefit in terms of the greater footfall the library will bring and also visitors will be able to have access to the collection for 30 hours per week throughout the year.

3.9 The museum organises a good programme of outreach events and in 2017/18 the number of participants in these activities was 2,265, with 612 pupils visiting from local schools. These events will continue.

3.10 The museum continues to collect and protect items relating to the archaeology and history of Montgomeryshire. It is significant to Welshpool and the county of Montgomeryshire and by virtue of its function provides an invaluable social, educational and economic service. This will not change when the library and the museum co-locate.

#### **4. Revenue costs**

4.1 In 2018/19 the net revenue budget for the Museum Service is £404,300. The revenue budget for Powysland Museum is £112,320.

4.2 In 2018/19 the net revenue budget for the Library Service is £1,730,340. The net revenue budget for Welshpool Library is £117,560.

4.3 In 2019/20 the Museum Service has proposed budgets savings to achieve amounting to £85,000. The Library Service has a proposed target of £200,000.

4.4 The proposed revenue budget for co-located museum and library for 2019/20 is £125,380, presenting a revenue savings of £73,650 on current revenue budgets. This figure represents 26% of the total savings target for the Library Service and Museum Service for 2019/20.

4.5 The Museum and Library Services are reviewing service provision in all towns across the county in response to extreme budget pressures. It is recognised that the way services are represented locally will have to change in order to meet financial challenges, and that often maintaining separate buildings for services is no longer cost effective or sustainable.

4.6 Co-located services present opportunities for reducing building related costs and staffing efficiencies through revised staff structures, whilst still maintaining a presence in local communities.

4.7 Powys County Council owns a number of properties in Welshpool and is seeking to rationalise these assets through disposal and to co-locate services to reduce revenue costs. Three key properties form part of the strategic asset plan for Welshpool and include Neuadd Maldwyn, the current library building and Powysland Museum.

4.8 On 18 December Cabinet approved the closure of Powys County Council's main office in Welshpool, Neuadd Maldwyn, as part of a major office review. Corporate Property will look to refurbish the current library building to provide a touchdown base, providing a mix of permanent and agile workspace for a large number of staff for services currently based in Welshpool. Closing Neuadd Maldwyn will generate an additional revenue saving of £147,100 and release Powys County Council from a significant additional capital burden in repair work.

## **5. Options Considered / Available**

5.1 Option 1: maintain both services at present locations at a cost of £229,880 (this figure does not include wage inflation) – this is the preferred option of the majority of respondents to the consultation. Implications:

- No contribution to budgetary savings targets for either service
- Both services cannot be financially sustained in the immediate term, meaning that one or both may have to cease
- Major impact on plans for relocation of staff from Neuadd Maldwyn including achievement of revenue savings of £147,100 and capital repair costs avoided through closing the building
- Public satisfaction at no change to much loved services and buildings

5.2 Option 2: co-locate Welshpool library and museum in Powysland Museum building, including integration of staff team to form one combined facility.

Implications:

- Contribution to budgetary savings for both services, more sustainable for long term. £73,650 revenue savings created across both services.
- Achievable, and within relatively short timescale; one-off capital estimate cost £63,000 which can be found through virement of existing library service capital provision, to cover building works, ICT network points and installation of self-service terminals for the library element
- Releases library building for relocation of staff from Neuadd Maldwyn into one site allowing revenue savings of £147,100 and capital savings in repair work, sustaining access to a range of other services and advice in the town.
- Dissatisfaction from respondents to consultation likely - significant proactive communications needed to allay public fears about change
- Reduced space for both services will need to be sensitively managed and used in a flexible way to maximise beneficial outcomes
- Potential for future development of canal basin area (possibly with Town Council)
- Successful museum/library colocation elsewhere e.g. Llanidloes

5.3 Option 3: withdraw both services in the town. Implications:

- Complete loss of beneficial outcomes and outputs from both services
- Significant negative impact on both residents and tourism economy
- Contrary to public demand as expressed through consultation - major public dissatisfaction and legal challenge could be expected; further consultation over closure would be required.
- The cost of running both provisions would be saved. This amounts to £229,880

5.4 Option 4: revisit other options for one or both services and/or staff from Neuadd Maldwyn, such as other locations, externalisation, or work with Town Council and community on other proposals. Implications:

- Uncertainty - alternative solutions may not be achievable or could cost more
- Timescale to achieve alternatives likely to be lengthy and would cause delay to achievement of any savings or cost-avoidance from co-location or from release of Neuadd Maldwyn (which has already been determined as unfit for purpose for Powys County Council)
- Review of alternative properties suggested show that Powys County Council does not own other buildings which would be suitable for the purpose

## **6. Preferred Choice and Reasons**

6.1 The preferred option is to co-locate the two services within Powysland Museum building, with an integrated staff team for seamless front of house service delivery (option 2).

## 6.2 The advantages of the preferred choice are as follows:

- A co-location solution means that both the museum and library will maintain a presence in the town, and offer £73,650 revenue savings, particularly through the combined staff team.
- Co-location projects have been done successfully in other locations – most notably Llanidloes. Libraries and museums naturally enjoy symbiotic relationships and work well if housed together.
- The current opening hours of the library will be maintained and for the museum will be extended. Particularly lunchtime closure of the museum will be addressed. If the library and museum do not co-locate reaching the revenue savings for the Museum Service will only be achieved in 2019/20 by reducing Powysland Museum opening to six months a year through a seasonal arrangement. Further revenue savings demands beyond 2019/20 will likely see the closure of Powysland Museum.
- The proposals clearly align with the Council's asset management and strategic direction in Welshpool. It particularly enables the potential disposal of Neuadd Maldwyn which is listed, not in a good state of repair and too large for the Council's future needs.
- Powysland Museum is located on the canal in Welshpool which is recognised as one of the county's most significant tourism assets, and plans to regenerate the canal will bring significant economic benefits to the town.
- Co-locating both the museum and library in one building will benefit to local people and visitors to the town. Those with interest in the museum will be encouraged to use the public library facilities; and library users in turn will have the opportunity to learn more about the heritage and culture of the town through the museum displays.
- Rights in the canal winding hole are currently owned by Powys County Council and present income opportunities to help off-set revenue spend.
- Powysland Museum has two Trusts associated with it – one benefits from the RU Sayce bequest and in the future is likely to receive a modest annual sum which helps with collection care and management. Greater use of the two Trusts could help develop and enhance service delivery through grant funded projects.
- The proposal means service delivery of both the museum and library stays with Powys County Council. Concerns have been noted above around transferring this to the Town Council. However there still is an opportunity for joint working; as phase two the Town Council could take on the building through a Community Asset Transfer, along with the canal winding hole which they wish to acquire as part of the plans to develop the canal. This fits in with the Council's strategic vision of working with town/community councils and the community delivery programme.
- The combined footfall makes both services more cost effective; the museum had 7,522 visitors in 2017/18, whilst the library had 36,300. Library+ council services are well used in Welshpool, with over 2,000



transactions in 2017/18, and the public access computers are also well used.

6.3 Perceived disadvantages of the preferred option include:

- Reduced floor space. Library stock and museum exhibitions and displays (permanent and temporary) will be reduced. There will have to be an evaluation of the number of public access computers, and a review of museum storage provision and operational needs such as library crate deliveries in a much reduced facility.
- Limited space for further “community hub” style developments or inclusion of other service offers e.g. tourist information or registrar
- Limited parking at the museum, although what is there can be designated as disabled parking.

## **7. Impact Assessment**

7.1 Is an impact assessment required?            Yes

7.2 If yes is it attached?                        Yes – see Appendix D

## **8. Corporate Improvement Plan**

8.1 Contribution to economy: libraries and museums draw people into town centres and attract tourists too, both of which benefit the local shops and businesses. In addition, libraries support job seekers and self-employed/small businesses through the IT and information provision which offers supported access to jobseekers online and government gateways. There is potential to further develop visitor attractions and associated spend e.g. shop, cottages, wharf/canal usage, and to consider use of outside space for range of cultural activities in summer period.

8.2 Health and care priorities: Health promotion and access to health information is one of the universal offers provided by libraries across the UK. Visits to the library and museum improve the health and wellbeing of residents and reading boosts mental health, along with social interaction. Book prescription schemes and access to health information is already provided, and volunteer opportunities enhance the offer.

8.3 Learning and skills: libraries support learners of all ages and abilities through provision of quality resources and help with accessing and using those resources, including independent study space and providing a location for 1-1 tuition and courses. Museums have also proved to be ‘safe’ places in which people can learn and develop. This learning experience can come about either as a visitor or as a volunteer giving people the opportunity to learn more about their local history and heritage. Combining both services in one location enhances opportunities on one site.

8.4 Residents and community: Museum and library services support residents to live fulfilled lives and to feel part of their community. Co-location will offer 2

community based services in one location, whilst volunteer opportunities at the combined centre should support a feeling of belonging to the local community.

8.5 Risks to the Council include:

- Ongoing public dissatisfaction and negativity with the proposal, including judicial review around the consultation process
- CADW requirements creating delay/cost

## **9. Local Member(s)**

9.1 This proposal has particular significance for the Local Members in Welshpool and surrounding area.

9.2 It is extremely disappointing to even be discussing the proposed relocation of the library in Welshpool along with the down-sizing of the valuable Powysland Museum.

Despite footfall at the library having fallen by over half in the last 10 years it remains a valued and relatively well-used facility.

The Powysland Museum has a deep-rooted history in the town and is a valuable attraction, bringing many tourists to the town. The facility is enthusiastically managed, hosts numerous exhibitions each year and is a regular destination for local schools.

It is accepted that the down-sizing of both these facilities will result in a poorer service.

However it is also accepted that there remains a greater threat of completely losing one or both these services in Welshpool as part of the council's widespread transformation process.

With this threat in mind I am supportive of the colocation to the Museum site which ensures the future of both and the protection of some, if not all staff roles.

Cllr. Graham Breeze

9.3 Co-location of Library and Museum Welshpool

I am in favour of Option 1

The decision to co-locate the library and the museum is strictly a cost cutting exercise and does not take into account the importance that the residents attach to these facilities. This is shown by the numbers who, along with myself, signed the Save the Library petition.

The submission by the Save Welshpool Library Group is a very compelling, well written and thoughtful document. I am in total agreement with its conclusions and hope that as requested the council will –

Call a halt to their proposals  
Undertake meaningful consultation  
Meet with the community and partners to identify meaningful and innovative solutions

In Vision 2025 it states “We will work with communities to support the development of local Place Based Plans, enabling communities to have an active role in the design and delivery of the services and amenities they need locally to improve their communities”

I hope that in line with the above the Cabinet will listen to the residents of Welshpool and undertake further consultation before making a decision on the co-location of the Library and Museum.  
Cllr Francesca Jump.

#### **10. Other Front Line Services**

Does the recommendation impact on other services run by the Council or on behalf of the Council?      No

#### **11. Communications**

Have Communications seen a copy of this report?      Yes

Comment: The report is of public interest and requires use of news release and appropriate social media to publicise the decision.

#### **12. Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)**

12.1 Legal: Professional Lead notes the comments and the preferred option contained

12.2 Finance: Finance have worked with the service in identifying the savings and can support the report, which achieves a revenue saving of £73,650 across both services. The Capital and Financial Planning Accountant confirms that there is an underspend in the Self Service Terminal budget in 18/19 and this budget should be used to finance this expense.

12.3 Corporate Property: The Professional Lead for Strategic Property supports the proposal which will ensure that both the Library and Museum

services are sustainable. One of my surveyors has reviewed the estimated costs of converting the museum building to incorporate the Library service and stated that £63k of these costs can be linked to the conversion. The further costs are improvements for the building which are not strictly necessary as a result of this move.

12.4 HR: Professional Lead notes the comments and preferred option. The staffing implications is not set out in any detail but, as in any change involving staff, the Council’s Management of Change policy will be applied with the consultation and engagement of recognised trade unions.

**13. Scrutiny**

Has this report been scrutinised? No

**14. Statutory Officers**

14.1 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) commented as follows : “ I note the legal comments and have nothing to add to the report.”

14.2 The S151 officer notes the comments made by Finance

**15. Members’ Interests**

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If the Portfolio Holders have an interest, he/ she should declare it, complete the relevant notification for and refer the matter to Cabinet for decision.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
<p><b>That Welshpool Library co-locates with Powysland Museum at the current Powysland Museum building.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To contribute towards the corporate strategic asset plan for Welshpool town</b></li> <li>• <b>To contribute towards reductions in the revenue budget for both services for 2019/20</b></li> <li>• <b>To provide a sustainable and long term future for both the museum and library in Welshpool</b></li> </ul>

<b>Relevant Policy (ies):</b>			
<b>Within Policy:</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Within Budget:</b>	<b>Y</b>

<b>Relevant Local Member(s):</b>	Cllr Graham Breeze, Cllr Francesca Jump, Cllr Phil C
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<b>Person(s) To Implement Decision:</b>	Principal Lead Museums Archives & Information Management, Principal Librarian
<b>Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:</b>	01/04/2019

<b>Is a review of the impact of the decision required?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If yes, date of review</b>	
<b>Person responsible for the review</b>	
<b>Date review to be presented to Portfolio Holder/ Cabinet for information or further action</b>	

Contact Officer: Catherine Richards and Kay Thomas Tel: Email: <a href="mailto:Catherine.richards@powys.gov.uk">Catherine.richards@powys.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:kay.thomas@powys.gov.uk">kay.thomas@powys.gov.uk</a>
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**Background Papers used to prepare Report:**