

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

Date 19th May 2020

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Rachel Powell
Portfolio Holder for Young People & Culture**

REPORT TITLE: Phased approach to re-opening of libraries in Powys

REPORT FOR: Decision / Discussion

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline a phased approach to the safe re-opening of libraries in Powys during the coronavirus pandemic.

2. Background

- 2.1 On Friday 8th May 2020, the First Minister for Wales announced that Councils across Wales can now plan towards the re-opening of libraries and waste recycling centres as a first phase of easing lockdown measures.
- 2.2 Particular concern was expressed around issues of rural and digital isolation, as the reason for including libraries in the first phase.
- 2.3 The Health Protection (Coronavirus restrictions) (Wales) 2020 regulations were amended on 11th May 2020, to permit public libraries to open subject to the requirements to take all reasonable measures to ensure a distance of 2 metres is maintained by persons on the premises and persons waiting to enter the premises. In addition, that visiting a library constitutes a reason for the public to leave their homes, under regulation 8(1).
- 2.4 The reason for this report is to consider ways in which some library services could be re-introduced in Powys in a phased manner, with the safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers and residents at the heart of the approach.

3. Advice

- 3.1 The service believes that a 4 phased approach could be taken to re-opening libraries in Powys, as follows:
- 3.2 **Phase 1:** click-and-collect/order-and-deliver non-contact model, with public access to designated areas for collection only by appointment (secured foyer). Quarantine periods for handling books built in and social distancing measures, including signage and good hygiene methods, strictly endorsed. To be offered from 6 main libraries across Powys initially (Newtown, y Gaer, Llandrindod, Llanfyllin, Machynlleth and Ystradgynlais). Staff will continue to promote use of the e-resources as the preferred method of accessing books and information. This phase could be introduced in early June 2020, there is no defined timeframe at present as confirmation of quarantine periods for books from Public Health Wales is required. Advice from H&S colleagues has been received. The order and deliver model would aim to tap into the current volunteer structure operational within communities, which could be critical to its implementation.
- 3.3 **Phase 2:** There will be limited access to library buildings by appointment for essential computer use and council enquiries only. Strict social distancing and hygiene protocols will need to be in place. This phase will include a review of building layouts and require furnishing adaptations. Advice and support from Property colleagues and the Property Cell would be essential. No timescales for implementation suggested at this stage as this will require further and careful analysis in view to risk/benefit.
- 3.4 **Phase 3:** introduction of browsing shelves. Numbers entering the library building to be strictly limited, one-way systems introduced, and self-service to be used wherever possible. No timescales for implementation. Strict hygiene principles and clear instructions for the public in view to book loans and returns.
- 3.5 **Phase 4:** full opening and re-introduction of activities and events with an additional awareness of need and reflections on improvement for the benefit of communities as well as partnership working. Future model of delivery to mirror community need. No timescales as the service recognises that constant reviews at every stage will need to be carefully analysed.
- 3.6 Museums Archives and Libraries Division of Welsh Government (MALD) support the phases above across Wales, and some funding is to be made available to support operating costs. MALD would like to see all authorities moving at the same pace for phase 1, with a national communication strategy, but acknowledge that it is a

decision for each local authority dependent on local circumstances and community need.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 Any phased reopening of libraries will be subject to the availability of staff, many of whom have been redeployed to other critical work. Phase 1 would require lower numbers and would aim to be implemented with the least disruption possible. However, it may be necessary to request the return of some staff to the service in order to complete this.
- 4.2 Additional cleaning would be required. Phase 2 onwards may require a cleaner on-site during opening hours, therefore, this would need to be carefully understood in view to cost, resource and also the safety of staff and the general public.
- 4.3 Phase 2 onwards would require adaptations to buildings and furniture. For example screens at reception, booths around computers, single-use covers for keyboards and mouse etc. This work would need to be supported by Property colleagues and contractors. This will need to be carefully analysed in view to community need and the preference will always be virtual support, however, it is recognised that some members of the public may not be able to access information independently, through a digital form.
- 4.4 Phases 2 onwards also require cashless solutions for printing and copying payments if possible.
- 4.5 MALD have indicated that some budget will be available to authorities to support re-opening costs, but with no indication of amounts to date.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 The recommendation is that phase 1 (click & collect/order & deliver) is implemented once the Public Health Wales guidance on quarantine periods for books is confirmed, in order to boost mental health and wellbeing of residents as well as identifying current need.
- 5.2 If approval for Phase 1 is given, the Service aims to work with staff, colleagues and partners to ensure robust procedures are put in place, supported by Risk Assessments and guidance in order to protect staff, community volunteers, as well as the public from Covid 19.
- 5.2 That the library service works towards phase two, and develops clear plans with corresponding implementation costs. Future implementation as well as timeframes to be subject to review, taking into consideration the ongoing situation with regard to Covid19 cases within Powys as well as community need.

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

Head of Service: Nina Davies

Corporate Director: Nigel Brinn

CABINET REPORT NEW TEMPLATE VERSION 2