

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
12 March 2021**

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

REPORT TITLE: Performance of library service under Welsh Public
Library Standards framework, 2019/20

REPORT FOR: Information

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of the report is to receive and give consideration to the Annual Report from Welsh Government on the performance of the Library Service during 2019/20, as required under the Welsh Public Library Standards (6th Framework).

2. Background

2.1 The Welsh Government has a supervisory and monitoring role in relation to the 22 Library Authorities in Wales.

2.2 The Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) were first developed in 2002. The period 2019/20 is covered by the sixth performance framework, "Connected and Ambitious Libraries". Under this framework, the Authority's performance was measured against a revised set of 12 Core entitlements and 16 Quality Indicators, which includes impact and outcome measures, in order to demonstrate the wide range of benefits that result from public library use, such as improvements to people's literacy skills, digital skills and health and wellbeing. Ten of the Quality Indicators have targets, whilst the remaining 6 are for benchmarking purposes.

2.3 Due to the impact of coronavirus on senior librarians at the time of completing the annual report (June 2020), the reporting framework was reduced slightly. The number of Quality Indicators with targets was reduced to 9, and the overall number to 13, for this year only.

2.4 The Standards are intended to help define the responsibilities of library authorities in providing a "comprehensive and efficient" service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The performance framework aims to:

- enable the Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport to fulfil the statutory requirements of the 1964 Act in respect of superintending the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service by local authorities;
- provide a robust assessment of the performance of library services;
- have clear links to the Welsh Government's agenda, to ensure credibility across local government in Wales;
- incorporate outcome measures to show the benefits of using libraries;
- act as a driver for improvements to library services and local communities

3. **Advice**

3.1 It is proposed that the outcomes in the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report from Welsh Government on Powys Library Service 2019/20 are duly noted and considered in forward planning, so that the library service strives to maintain effective outcomes and improve performance under the Standards.

3.2 For the year 2019/20, the library service met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, 1 in part, and did not achieve one. The entitlement not met requires a current published strategy document for the service, to replace the 2015 document. This is being updated, and this entitlement will be met again going forward.

3.3 Of the 9 Quality Indicators with targets, the library service achieved 6 in full, 1 in part, and did not achieve two. Of the 2 not achieved, one was due to the impact of coronavirus on the supply of requested books in the last quarter of 2019/20 (Q12), whilst the other relates to investment by the authority in library materials/resources for residents (Q19). The library service has never met the spending targets per capita in the latter, in common with many authorities across Wales.

3.4 The report concludes that performance was broadly maintained in 2019/20, and the library service continues to provide a quality service, with usage generally above the median across Wales. It is particularly pleasing that loans to children increased in 2019/20, reflecting the priority which the service places on supporting the development of literacy and reading for pleasure amongst children and young people.

3.5 The full report is attached at Appendix A.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 There are no resource implications in the recommendation to accept the report.
- 4.2 To achieve quality indicator 9, up-to-date and adequate reading materials for the population size, would require additional investment of approximately £150,000 annually. The target is either a minimum of 243 items acquired or a spend of £2,180 per 1,000 resident population. In 2019/20, the library service achieved 150 items and a spend of £1,031 per 1000 resident population. There were only 5 authorities in Wales which achieved this standard in 2019/20, and the targets will be reviewed as part of developing the 7th standards framework, which will begin in April 2022.
- 4.3 The library service budget overall has very limited flexibility within it, with the main costs being fixed (staffing and premises). There are no reserves which could be moved into the resources budget to improve performance against this standard, so it will be necessary to seek grant funding as part of wider projects. Other authorities have found that even small injections of funding from other sources, such as grants or end-of-year slippage, do create increased loans and engagement with libraries.
- 4.4 The resources fund is maximised to achieve best value through membership of the Welsh Purchasing Consortium for physical books, which delivers very substantial discounts for all Welsh authorities. The Welsh libraries shared platform for e-resources, supported by MALD, also ensures access to a far wider range of reading materials than the service could afford independently, and as such is another example of achieving best value through collaboration.
- 4.5 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the content of the report and can support the recommendation.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal: The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: “ I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report”.

6. Data Protection

- 6.1 N/A

7. Comment from local member(s)

7.1 N/A

8. Integrated Impact Assessment

8.1 An impact assessment is not required as no change in service provision is recommended in this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 The recommendation is that the outcomes in the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report from Welsh Government on Powys Library Service 2018/19 are duly noted and considered in forward planning.

Contact Officer:	Kay Thomas
Tel:	01597 826864
Email:	kay.thomas@powys.gov.uk
Head of Service:	Nina Davies
Corporate Director:	Nigel Brinn