

## **CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**

**County Council  
10<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

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

**SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe**

**Can the portfolio holder please provide an update on the consultation with communities and user groups on the future of libraries across Powys County Council in line with the budget proposals for this year's budget and also the work planned for the budget round for 2020/21?**

### **Response**

The report on the consultation with communities and user groups on the future of libraries has been compiled, and a press release of the headline results has been sent out. The full report is with translation, and will go up on the website once it is completed.

We are very grateful to everyone who took part in all of the consultation meetings or sent us their ideas online, by post or through the libraries, and to those members who took part in all of the meetings held. We had a tremendous response overall, and have been left in no doubt how much residents value their libraries for the wide range of services and support which are available, in particular:

- access to free computers
- book and DVD loans
- story time sessions, coding clubs and the summer reading challenge activities for children
- advice and information from the librarians who double up as council customer service officers.

Libraries are seen as safe and social places for people to use and deemed particularly important in supporting those who may be more vulnerable in society. Respondents also rated highly the volunteers who have been supporting the service and keeping libraries open for longer.

The consultation has highlighted the role of the library service as the front face of Powys County Council in many of our communities, and we need to consider the impact of other decisions and service changes on residents who access support through libraries. The library service supports transformation agendas, particularly digital transformation, through providing the means for those without the technology or the ability to use it, to have supported access and not be disenfranchised.

Libraries and other leisure and cultural services are also key to thriving communities and the prevention of escalated need, increasing overall wellbeing opportunities and the perception of Powys as a good place to live, work and play. There is huge potential to work with Town and Community Councils and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector to transform the offer for the better, but we will need every one of you to work with us to achieve this.

We will be considering further all of the views given in order to prepare plans for the future, and are in discussions with various interested community groups to transform service delivery so we can make the savings needed and develop the local offer for a sustainable, long term future. Given the current economic situation for the council, there can be no doubt that the future will remain very challenging, and we will continue to need the help of all local members to reach solutions in your areas, to provide valued services in partnership and through different delivery models. If you have any further suggestions for your local library, or are able to provide sponsorship or practical help and support, please do not hesitate to let me know. The library service will be following up on each and every suggestion on a library by library basis.

The Housing & Community Development service, which includes libraries, has put forward their budget proposals for 2020/21, and these will be considered as part of the budget setting process. The services will be urgently investigating alternative delivery models, further co-locations and partnership arrangements, and income generation including sponsorship, patronage and Friends of groups.