



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28TH FEBRUARY 2013

**SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE COUNTY BOROUGH LIBRARY
SERVICE**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update to Members of the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on Library Service developments and achievements.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Caerphilly County Borough Council has made significant investments in its Public Library network in recent years. This information report seeks to highlight a number of the achievements that have been made to date and outline the work that is currently underway to complete the programme of modernisation.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Public Libraries contribute to a number of the Council's core priorities and Improvement Plan objectives including the key themes of the Community Strategy.
- 3.2 Public Libraries support a number of the core aims of the Council's Plan for Children and Young People, in particular core aims 1, 2, 4, and 7.
- 3.3 Caerphilly County Borough Council Library Service supports the delivery of the Welsh Government's strategic development framework for Libraries, entitled 'Libraries Inspire', and continues to work toward National Standard and Performance Indicator attainment.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Since 2006 £2.5 million has been spent refurbishing 11 of the County Borough's 18 Library facilities. Welsh Government grant funding, through the Community Learning Libraries Programme, has supported the renovation, refurbishment, and in some instance relocation of 8 of these facilities with £1.1 million secured from this competitive funding scheme.
- 4.2 The overall cost of recent library building improvement works, including the planned spend on the Caerphilly development, taking into account all grant monies and Developer/Housing Association investment exceeds £12 million.

- 4.3 The impact of the County Borough's investment is illustrated by the marked increase in public circulatory space available to local residents at Council Libraries in 2012-13 when compared to 2006-07. Modern Library facilities require space to create a welcoming public environment, to house book and non book materials attractively, to provide additional services including learning areas, meeting rooms, or refreshment points. In the last six years there has been a 33% increase in the space provided at Council library facilities for customer circulation. The completion of Caerphilly Library and Customer Service Centre will see public circulatory space increase further to 65% above the levels provided in 2006 and the Authority will for the first time meet the challenging Welsh Government Public Library Standard on buildings.
- 4.4 In addition the County Borough Council Library Service has seen an 11% increase in visits to Libraries over the last four years and a 15% uplift in book borrowing over the same period. These increases can be directly linked to the improved buildings and service offer available to residents. It is anticipated that this trend will continue as both Bargoed Chapel and Risca Palace become further established while Aberbargoed, Newbridge, and Caerphilly new Library are completed.
- 4.5 Caerphilly County Borough Council is recognised within Wales as being a leading Authority in the co-location of Library Services with other complementary partners. In some instances, Bargoed Hanbury Chapel for example, the Library Service has worked closely with colleagues in Customer Services, the local Chapel congregation, and a Social Enterprise Coffee Shop to deliver an Award winning facility to the public.
- 4.6 The table provided below highlights the new Library buildings opened by the Council, noting the improvements achieved and the impact on local performance:

Library	What has been achieved?	Performance Attainment	View of the Public & Stakeholders
Abercarn (May 2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £280,000 construction costs for the Library element within a £1 million scheme. Library occupies the ground floor with 10 older person apartments above. Partnership with contractor (Carn Limited) and Seren Housing Group. Public floor area increased by a third. Dedicated areas for children, young people, adults, and learners. Increased IT facilities including free Wireless access. Inclusion of Community run coffee shop. 	<p>58% increase in book borrowing by children and young people between June and December 2012.</p> <p>Overall lending has increased by 9% during last 6 months.</p> <p>28% increase in visits by the public.</p>	<p>General feedback to date has been very positive and complimentary.</p> <p>Too early to have undertaken a formal adult or Child User Survey.</p>
Bargoed Chapel (October 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £3.4 million scheme. Conversion and extension of Hanbury Road Baptist Chapel, a two star listed building. Partnership with United Welsh Housing Association. 133% increase in public floor space. Library services delivered over three distinct floors including a Family & Local History Centre, Learning space, Children and Adult Lending Library and extensive provision for young adults – including a lounge area with Xbox and Wii gaming equipment. 40,000 items available for loan or reference. 22 Public access computers and free wireless provision throughout. Retained worshipping area used every Sunday by the Hanbury Road Baptist congregation – including original pulpit, pews, and new baptismal pool. Customer Service Centre with shared main reception desk. 	<p>164,000 visitors in first year open, a 134% improvement on the previous year.</p> <p>49,000 book and audio visual loans in first year of operation, a 95% increase on the previous year.</p>	<p>Bargoed Chapel has won five prestigious awards, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action for Market Towns in Wales – 'Social & Community' Category Construction Excellence Wales – 'Project of the Year' New Start Better Places Award Regeneration and Renewal Award – 'Best use of Heritage' Royal Town Planning Institute Wales Award <p>Children and Young People Survey (2011) - 100% surveyed felt the Chapel was 'Cheerful' and a 'Friendly place to be'.</p>
Risca Palace (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £2.25 million scheme. Partnership with developer Johnsey Estates. Renovation of listed Cinema frontage as part of a new build incorporating the town Library, a new Customer Service Centre. and separate food store. 	<p>120,000 visitors in the first year open, a 96% improvement on the previous year.</p>	<p>Children and Young People Survey (2011) - 99% surveyed felt the Palace was 'Bright and Cheerful' and 93% thought the Library</p>

	<p>Customer Service Centre, and separate food store.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 104% increase in public floor space. • Enhanced areas for children, young people, learners, and adults. • Community learning and public meeting space incorporated on the first floor. • Free wireless access throughout and doubling of Public Internet terminals provided. 	<p>78,000 book and audio visual loans in the first year of operation, a 32% increase on the previous year.</p>	<p>'Good' or 'Very Good'.</p>
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4.7 In addition to the new buildings detailed in 4.6 above, the County Borough Library Service has also undertaken the following noteworthy refurbishments, including the provision of dedicated community learning areas, re-design and modernisation of public space, and the incorporation of DDA enhancements:

- 2006-07 **Ystrad Mynach Library**
- 2007-08 **Abertridwr Library**
- 2008-09 **Nelson Library**
- 2008-09 **Rhymney Library**
- 2009-10 **Pengam Library**
- 2010-11 **Deri Library**
- 2011-12 **Blackwood Library**

4.8 During 2013-14 the Council will complete its planned programme of Library building modernising work with three final projects:

- **Aberbargoed Library re-provisioning and refurbishment** –including a new roof, replacement windows, carpet, decoration, and soft furnishings. The Library will include a Multi-Agency Information Resource Centre housing a small team of Flying Start Health Visitors and other related child care staff.
- **Newbridge Library relocation to Celynen Collieries Institute and Memorial Hall** – The Library, currently located in a 1970's wood panelled structure, will occupy the ground floor of the renovated Institute building. The new Library will be better located and will provide residents with a modern attractive facility including dedicated space for children, young people, adults, and learners. The new facility will be twice as large as the current site.
- **Caerphilly New Library and Customer Service Centre** – the redevelopment of the former Post Office site will see the construction of an innovative contemporary facility delivered over three floors. The present Library at Morgan Jones Park occupies a small 1950's building that is completely unsuitable. The new Library and Customer Service Centre will include a bespoke young person's space, extensive children's Library, adult lending area, IT and community learning facility, meeting rooms, and a reference and Museum Centre on the second floor. The new facility will be five times larger than the current service point.

4.9 During the next two years the County Borough Library Service will seek to build on the improvements noted in this report. A review of the Council's 10 year plan for Library Service development, adopted in 2003, will form the initial focus of this work taking full account of the 2011 Census population data whilst seeking to develop more equity and consistency in opening hour provision across the present network of sites. In addition the present staffing structure of the County Borough Library Service will be revised to take account of the ongoing challenges of the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan whilst protecting delivery of front line services to the public.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct equalities implications to this report therefore no Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications resulting from this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 This is a factual report and has not been subject to any consultation.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To update Members on the service developments and achievements of the County Borough Library Service, in particular those linked to building led investment.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Author: Gareth Evans, Interim Manager Community Education,
evangs1@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Corporate Director Education and Lifelong Learning, Sandra Aspinall
Assistant Director Education and Lifelong Learning, Tony Maher
Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, Cllr. R Passmore
Education Senior Management Team

Background Papers:

Future Library Service for Caerphilly County Borough Council – Council November 2003