



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 6TH NOVEMBER 2012

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS IN WALES – ANNUAL LIBRARY
UPDATE REPORT 2011-12**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION & LIFE LONG LEARNING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee of the progress made by the County Borough Library Service in seeking to meet the 4th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards and Performance Indicators, during 2011-12.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service met or exceeded 6 of 9 Welsh Government Public Library Standards in 2011-12 (see Appendix 1 and 2). The County Borough's performance is deemed as average, when compared to Wales as a whole. For the purpose of comparison, the average number of Standards achieved by Welsh library authorities in 2011-12 was 6 the highest number achieved by an authority was 8 and the lowest was 3.
- 2.2 Attainment with regard to Welsh Public Library Performance Indicators (see Appendix 1 and 2) highlights a number of areas of relative improvement by Caerphilly County Borough Library Service. Physical Visits (WPLPI 1) a 7.7% increase, Annual loans (WPLPI2) a 11.6% uplift, and the investment by the Council in Library Services (WPLPI 6, 7, 8) have all improved in comparison to the Annual Return submitted for 2010-11 and the average performance of other Local Authorities in Wales.
- 2.3 While Library Standard and Performance Indicator designation has changed markedly between the present and former Welsh Government Frameworks, there are now 9 Standards as opposed to the previous 14 as an example, there has been no decline in the comparable number or type of Standards Caerphilly County Borough has met.
- 2.4 Areas where concerns have been raised by the Welsh Government assessors relate to safeguarding adequate levels of future investment in book and non-book materials and the need to review the present level of professional staffing in place.
- 2.5 The Welsh Government in assessing the County Borough's Annual Return 2011-12 notes that:-
- “the performance being achieved by the authority in many of the Standards and Performance indicators are now reflecting the benefits of substantial investment in library buildings and service enhancements within them. They are also reflecting effective policy decisions and management action.”

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Public Libraries contribute to a number of the Council's core priorities 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, in particular core aims 1, 2, 4 and 7.
- 3.3 The 4th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2011-14, entitled 'Maintaining a Valued Service' links closely with the 'Libraries Inspire: The strategic development framework for Welsh libraries 2012-16'.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 Fourth Assessment Framework for Welsh Public Library Authorities: Caerphilly County Borough Library Service Annual Return 2011-12

- 4.1.1 The year under review is the first of the 4th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2011-14. The 4th Framework focuses on supporting local authorities to maintain a core Library Service during a period of financial constraint for the public sector in Wales.
- 4.1.2 The County Borough Library Service's Five Year Development Plan, 2009-14, is recognised as being instrumental in assisting the authority to drive improvement in its provision of Library buildings and its increased focus on work with children and young people. Similarly the Council's ongoing commitment to invest in its Library buildings is seen as being 'excellent and extensive'.
- 4.1.3 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service is deemed to meet 6 of 9 standards (WPLS 1,2,3,5,6, and 7) whilst partially achieving 2 standards (WPLS 4 and 8) and currently is assessed as failing to meet 1 standard (WPLS 9).
- 4.1.4 Details of standards met, partially met, or not met are provided below:
 - 4.1.4.1 **WPLS 1, Access to Public Library Services Points (met)**
The Council continues to achieve a high level of performance against this standard although two service points closed during the year.
 - 4.1.4.2 **WPLS 2, Services to special user groups and those with special requirements (met)**
Provision is deemed as extensive but present arrangements and equipment will be reviewed by the Library Service in 2013-14.
 - 4.1.4.3 **WPLS 3, Aggregate annual opening hours for all service points (met)**
The Council's overall performance exceeds the minimum level required.
 - 4.1.4.4 **WPLS 4, ICT services and facilities for users (partial)**
The Local Authority plans to introduce public Wireless Access Points in all Libraries open 30 hours or more per week before the end of the Framework period enabling it to meet this Standard in full.
 - 4.1.4.5 **WPLS 5, Annual Acquisitions of materials for public use (met)**
Performance against this Standard is deemed to be satisfactory while the Council's commitment to invest further in resources targeted at children and young people is recognised. The Standard assessors note their concern that continued investment in book and non-book materials be maintained beyond the life of the present building improvement programme.
 - 4.1.4.6 **WPLS 6, Expenditure on materials for adults and young people (met)**
This standard is met in full, however the level of relative expenditure on resources for under

16's compared to adults requires ongoing monitoring to ensure appropriate funding is allocated to each category.

4.1.4.7 WPLS 7, Delivery of requests (met)

The Library Service is deemed to meet this standard by a significant margin.

4.1.4.8 WPLS 8, Library staffing (partial)

The Authority is deemed to employ sufficient staff to operate the Library Service however its percentage of professionally qualified officers is below the minimum set and is noted as an area of potential future concern should the present level diminish further.

4.1.4.9 WPLS 9, Capital expenditure and buildings (not met)

While performance against this standard remains below the minimum required for public floor space the commitment of the Council to improving its Library buildings and its achievements against this measure, a 20% increase during 2011-12, is applauded. It is anticipated that the opening of the new Caerphilly Library and Customer Service Centre will enable the Authority to meet this standard in full by the final year of the 4th Framework.

4.1.5 Summary of Welsh Public Library Performance Indicator achievement

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service has seen an incremental improvement in a number of the Welsh Government's Public Library Performance Indicators during 2011-12, when compared to previous returns. Improvements in WPLPI 1 (Visits) and WPLPI 3(Annual Issues) are of particular note and are linked in large part to a number of new building developments completed during 2011-12, including Bargoed Hanbury Chapel and the Risca Palace development. The improvements achieved are however below the average for Wales and highlight the level of ongoing attainment required for Caerphilly to reach, or exceed, the median level in future years.

The Council's financial commitment to the Library Service and the building improvement programme currently underway has had a positive impact on WPLPI 6-8 which relate to expenditure.

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 The cost of implementing free wireless computer access at Libraries open 30 hours or more per week, linked to Welsh Public Library Standard 4, is approximately £25,000. The funding for this improvement will be found from within the Council's Library Service budget.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proportion of professionally qualified staff employed by Caerphilly County Borough Library Service, Welsh Public Library Standard 8, will be considered as part of wider proposals to review the Education Directorate's Organisational Structure that will be progressed and reported upon in due course.

8. CONSULTATIONS

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

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members note the information received from the County Borough Library Service with regard to its performance for 2011-12 in working towards achieving the 4th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards and Performance Indicator Set, 2011-14. Members should also note the Welsh Government's Public Library Standard Reference Group assessment of this performance **See Appendix 1 and 2.**
- 9.2 That the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee endorses the Welsh Government Public Library Standards Annual Report 2011-12 and forward to Cabinet for approval.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Consult and seek the views of the Scrutiny Committee to meet the requirements of the Welsh Government Public Library Standards and Performance Indicator Set by 2014.

11 STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

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Education Group Accountant, Jane Southcombe
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Background Papers:

Education for Life Scrutiny Committee 2nd June 2009. Caerphilly County Borough Library Service – Five-Year Development Plan 2009-14

Cabinet 9th June 2009. Caerphilly County Borough Library Service – Five Year Development Plan 2009-14

Education for Life Scrutiny Committee 8th November 2011. Public Library Standards in Wales – Annual Library Update Report 2010-11

Cabinet 10th January 2012. Public Library Standards in Wales – Annual Library Update Report 2010-11

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Caerphilly Annual Report 2011-12
Appendix Maintaining a Valued Service: The Fourth Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards April 2011 – March 2014. Caerphilly County Borough Council Annual Return Pro Forma 2011-12