



**EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -  
24TH SEPTEMBER 2013**

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS IN WALES – ANNUAL LIBRARY  
UPDATE REPORT 2012-13**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

---

**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 4<sup>th</sup> Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards and Performance Indicators, during 2012-13.

**2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service met or exceeded 6 of 9 Welsh Government Public Library Standards in 2012-13 (see Appendix 1 and 2), the same number of measures that were achieved in 2011-12. 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 2012-13 was 6 the highest number achieved by an Authority was 8 and the lowest was 3.
- 2.2 The County Borough's attainment with regard to Welsh Public Library Performance Indicators (see Appendix 1 and 2) highlights a number of areas of improvement. Physical Visits (WPLPI 1) have increased by 11.3% during 2012-13 while sustained and improving investment by the Authority in its Library Services (WPLPI 6, 7, 8) is also reflected prominently in the Annual Return submitted and commended by the Welsh Government Standard assessors.
- 2.3 Performance with regard to other Library indicators is mixed with Annual Issues (WPLPI 4) declining by 7.5% while the percentage take up of computer facilities (WPLPI 3) has remained constant, though the actual number of hours used by the public has increased. Customer satisfaction (WPLPI 2), though not formally assessed until the final year of the present Framework, demonstrates the consistently high value that adult, children, and young people attach to the provision currently in place.
- 2.4 Library Standard assessor's note that further improvements against the present framework are within the control of the Authority and that most if not all the measures could be met by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014.
- 2.5 Welsh Government Standards assessors commended the Authority's 2012-13 Annual Return for the clarity of its detail and the coherence of the Council's approach to the planning and delivery of its Library Service. The Authority is commended for its investment in modern and attractive facilities and for its continuing financial support to sustain core levels of stock and its additional funding for new posts at a time when wider economic pressures are significant.

### 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 and the developing Single Integrated Plan, 'Caerphilly Delivers'.
- 3.2 The 4<sup>th</sup> Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2011-14, assists the Authority in working toward its Strategic Equalities Objectives, in particular:
- Strategic Equality Plan SEO 3- Physical Access  
Welsh Public Library Standard 1, 2, and 9
  - Strategic Equality Plan SEO 4- Communication  
Welsh Public Library Performance Indicator 2
  - Strategic Equality Plan SEO 5- Engagement and Participation  
Welsh Public Library Performance Indicator 2
- 3.3 The 4<sup>th</sup> 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 2012-13**

4.1.1 The year under review is the second of the 4<sup>th</sup> Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2011-14. The 4<sup>th</sup> 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 Authority is recognised for achievements linked to the 2009-14, Five Year Development Plan and its Library building improvement programme. The Standard assessors note:

"The authority is able to point to the manner in which it has delivered is ambitious Development Plan, and the effective manner in which it has funded key components."

Equally the Authority is recognised for the links made to local, regional and national agenda's in the planning of provision and it's strong emphasis on collaborative working and cooperation in the delivery of service improvements.

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 3 standards (WPLS 4, 8, and 9).

4.1.4 Details of standards met or partially met are provided below:

##### 4.1.4.1 **WPLS 1, Access to Public Library Services Points (met)**

97.7% of occupied Borough households are within 2 miles of a static Library, a slight drop on the level achieved in 2011-12 but well above the standard of 95%.

##### 4.1.4.2 **WPLS 2, Services to special user groups and those with special requirements (met)**

Provision is deemed as extensive and impressive. A review of present assistive technology equipment provided in the Authority's Libraries will take place this winter to ensure the facilities and resources provided remain fit for purpose.

##### 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 however there has been a decline compared to 2012-13, in part due to two Library closures and an increase in the Authority's population.

#### 4.1.4.4 **WPLS 4, ICT services and facilities for users (partial)**

The Local Authority plans to introduce public Wireless Access Points in the six remaining Libraries, open 30 hours or more per week, that have not been upgraded to date. The completion of wireless access across these sites by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 will enable the Authority to meet this Standard in full.

#### 4.1.4.5 **WPLS 5, Annual Acquisitions of materials for public use (met)**

Performance against this Standard exceeds the minima required and, as with WPLS 6 noted below, the Authority's commitment to book and other material purchases is commended by the assessors, despite a slight decline when comparisons are made to 2011-12.

#### 4.1.4.6 **WPLS 6, Expenditure on materials for adults and young people (met)**

This standard is met in full, though expenditure on both adult and young people's resources has marginally declined. Concerns raised by the Standard assessors in the 2011-12 return relating to the gap in expenditure between adult and children and young people's spend have been carefully monitored during 2012-13 and reduced by 5%.

#### 4.1.4.7 **WPLS 7, Delivery of requests (met)**

The Library Service is deemed to meet this standard by a significant margin. Performance against each of the three supply periods, 7, 15, and 30 calendar days, has increased in 2012-13 when compared to 2011-12.

#### 4.1.4.8 **WPLS 8, Library staffing (partial)**

The Authority is deemed to employ sufficient staff to operate the Library Service. The Authority's attainment with regard to the percentage of professionally qualified staff remains slightly below the minimum set. The impact of increased Library Assistant posts at the new Caerphilly Library will reduce the percentage of professional staff during 2013-14.

#### 4.1.4.9 **WPLS 9, Capital expenditure and buildings (partial)**

The Authority is commended for the quality and attractiveness of its building provision following recent years of planned investment. Performance with regard to the level of public space available has declined slightly during 2012-13 in part due to the full year effect of two library closures and an increase in the Borough's resident population. It is anticipated that, following the reopening of Aberbargoed Library, the relocation of services to the Newbridge Memo, and the completion of a three storey facility in Caerphilly town that this Standard will be met in full by 2013-14.

#### 4.1.5 **Summary of Welsh Public Library Performance Indicator achievement**

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service's performance indicator achievements were mixed during 2012-13. Welsh Public Library Performance Indicator (WPLPI) 1, the number of people using the library service per 1,000 resident population increased by 11.3% in 2012-13 with 90,633 additional visits by customers, an achievement which the Welsh Government Standards assessor believe vindicates the Council's ongoing investment in and development of its Libraries.

Customer satisfaction with the Authority's Library Service (WPLPI 2) has improved overall with high levels of customer approval in each of the areas recorded. It is noteworthy that the proportion of users who rated their Library as 'very good' or similar has increased in each of the indicator elements reported to Welsh Government.

Conversely annual book and non book issues per 1,000 resident population (WPLPI 4) declined by 7.5% in 2012-13 though a number of facilities including, Abercarn, Bargoed Hanbury Chapel, Llanbradach, and Risca Palace increased their performance by between 14% and 46%. The relative decline in book and non book borrowing can be linked to changing patterns of leisure use where residents have loaned fewer items at a time, the increase in e-book access, and a marginal drop in activity by children compared to 2011-12.

Computer usage by the public in local Libraries (WPLPI 3) has increased by 10,414 hours in 2012-13, compared to 2011-12, however as the Authority has increased its number of public terminals, as new or refurbished facilities are opened, its overall percentage of active use has remained unchanged at 23%.

The Council's financial commitment to the Library Service and its building improvement programme continues to have a significant and positive impact on the Library Services performance with regard to expenditure related indicators (WPLPI 6-8), and has been commended by the Welsh Government Standards assessors. Caerphilly County Borough Council performs well above the Welsh median in each of the indicators noted above. Conversely due to the increase in the Library Services overall budget its performance with regard to the proportion spent on books and other collection items (WPLPI 5) has declined in relative terms, though the monies allocated have remained relatively constant between 2011-12 and 2012-13.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required because the issues covered by this report are for information purposes only, seeking to update Members with regard to the Authority's performance in respect of Welsh Government Public Library Standards; therefore the Council's full EIA process does not need to be applied.

## **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 work has been identified within the Council's Library Service budget for 2013-14 and the improvements are expected to be completed by December 2013.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The future proportion of professionally qualified staff employed by Caerphilly County Borough Library Service, Welsh Public Library Standard 8(ii), forms part of an ongoing consultation with staff and their representatives in the form of a Task and Finish Group, to achieve a structure that is fit for the future both strategically and financially. Once the consultation process has concluded the finding of such will be presented to Education for Life Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in due course.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The views of the following consultee's have been included within this report:

Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Sandra Aspinall  
Assistant Director Education and Lifelong Learning, Tony Maher  
Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, Cllr. R Passmore  
Education Senior Management Team  
Senior Legal Assistant, Russell Allen  
Education Group Accountant, Jane Southcombe  
Principal Human Resource Officer, Kathryn Davies

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Members note the information received from the County Borough Library Service with regard to its performance for 2012-13 in working towards achieving the 4<sup>th</sup> Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards and Performance Indicator Set, 2011-14.

- 9.2 Members should also note the Welsh Government's Public Library Standard Reference Group assessment of this performance **See Appendix 1 and 2.**
- 9.3 That the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee endorses the Welsh Government Public Library Standards Annual Report 2012-13 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.

Author: Gareth Evans, Interim Manager Community Education  
Consultees: Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Sandra Aspinall  
Assistant Director Education and Lifelong Learning, Tony Maher  
Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, Cllr. R Passmore  
Education Senior Management Team  
Senior Legal Assistant, Russell Allen  
Education Group Accountant, Jane Southcombe  
Principal Human Resource Officer, Kathryn Davies

### Background Papers:

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

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

Education for Life Scrutiny Committee 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012. Public Library Standards in Wales – Annual Library Update Report 2011-12

Cabinet 13<sup>th</sup> November 2012. Public Library Standards in Wales – Annual Library Update Report 2011-12

### Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Caerphilly Annual Report 2012-13  
Appendix 2 Maintaining a Valued Service: The Fourth Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards April 2011 – March 2014. Caerphilly County Borough Council Annual Return Pro Forma 2012-13