



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – INFORMATION ITEM

**SUBJECT: CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH LIBRARY SERVICE
ANNUAL WELSH GOVERNMENT STANDARDS
ASSESSMENT 2019-20**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

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 6th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, Core Entitlements, and Quality Indicators, during 2019-20.
- 1.2 A guide to the features contained in the 2017-2020 Welsh Government Public Library Standards Framework is included for Member awareness as **Appendix 1**.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This is the 3rd year of the Welsh Government Framework entitled, 'Connected and Ambitious Libraries 2017-2020.' The 6th Framework has been amended for 2019/2020. Due to the impact of COVID19, 3 Quality Indicators have been removed, of one which had a constituent target. Therefore, only 9 instead of 10 Quality Indicators with targets were required for this report. The return comprises of:
 - 12 Core Entitlements.
 - 16 Quality Indicators of which have 9 have constituent targets.
 - The Welsh Government Ranking Table comparing each Local Authority's Standards ranks Caerphilly as jointly placed 3 of 22.
 - Good impact Case Studies evidencing library service contribution to service users.
 - Strategic narrative demonstrating the library service contribution towards the wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals.
- 2.2 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service was assessed as meeting all 12 of the Welsh Government Core Entitlements.

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service was assessed as meeting in full, 7 of the 9 Quality Indicators for Wales that have assigned targets, 1 in part with 1 indicator not met.

The Welsh Government Ranking Table comparing each Local Authority's Standards ranks Caerphilly as joint number 3 of 22: a rise of 2 places from the 2018/19 return.

The four case studies assessing the impact of library use on people's lives were evaluated and agreed by the Assessor.

A detailed statement highlighting the synergy between library service activities and both the Council's Well-Being Objectives, and the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act was evaluated and agreed by the Assessor.

A copy of the formal Welsh Government assessment is included with this report as **Appendix 2**.

2.3 The Welsh Government Standards Reference Group on assessing Caerphilly County Borough Library Service's submission for 2019-20 identified the following areas of particular strength in the Authority's performance.

- Caerphilly Library Service meets all of the 12 Core Entitlements in full.
- Caerphilly has continued to deliver effectively against the standards framework in 2019/20 with only 1 target unmet.
- Forward planning and a strong emphasis on staff development and training has ensured that the service remains resilient, and has performed well despite a number of challenges.
- There is an increase in three of the four category results in the CIPFA Adult User Survey conducted in May 2019. The survey reports the percentage of adults who consider the library a safe and inclusive space remains above the median in Wales.
- Increases in library membership and a strong increase in e-resource usage.
- Whilst COVID-19 restrictions remained challenging to all library services in Wales, it was noted by the Assessment Panel that, 'Caerphilly library staff resilience, professionalism and care for the community they service has been outstanding.'
- It is noted that there is an excellent range of resources for young people and children in Caerphilly.
- Caerphilly has provided a comprehensive overview of the link between library activities and Caerphilly Council and Welsh Government strategies. The breadth of impact on a variety of wellbeing outcomes, such as poverty, social isolation and health and wellbeing is noted.

2.4 The Welsh Government Public Libraries Standards Reference Group noted a number of areas of performance that were below the average for Wales and that require further attention by the Borough Council in maintaining its capability to deliver a strong performing service in the future. These included:

- Whilst levels of ICT provision/access are high and Caerphilly offers the greatest proportion of Internet terminals for use by residents in Wales, the take up and actual use of Borough digital services in this format continue to decline, as the number of individuals with their own devices accessing Wi-Fi in libraries increases.
- There has been a slight decline in the percentage of adults who think that IT facilities are very good or good. The service notes that it is not always able to meet the online and technological level of expectation from its customers. The Directorate are currently exploring funding options to develop a replacement programme of public access terminals at all 18 library site to further improve customer education, IT skills and employment support.
- The overall target for staff per capita is not achieved however it is important to note that no authority in Wales fully meets the staffing or professional staffing standard during 2019/20.
- A combination of important service developments contributed to decrease of children and young adult issues. These include a closure of all libraries on 20th March 2020 due to COVID19, integration to the new All-Wales Library Management System from 16th March and a review and audit of Community Loan collections held around the borough.

2.5 The overall assessment of the County Borough Council's Public Library Service for 2019-2020 highlights, *'Caerphilly has continued to deliver effectively against the Standards Framework in 2019/20 with only one target unmet.'* It is reported that, *'the impact of funding constraints on service capacity and delivery is something the authority should continue to consider carefully.'*

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Education for Life Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the information contained in this report. A summary of the Library Service performance has also been included within the Local Authority's Directorate Performance Assessment presented to Cabinet.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To inform Education for Life Scrutiny Members of the progress achieved by the County Borough Library Service in meeting the requirements of the 6th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2017-20.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 The Welsh Government Executive Summary assessment of Caerphilly Borough Council's performance against the 6th Standards Framework for Public Libraries during 2019/20 states,

'Caerphilly has continued to deliver effectively against the standards framework in 2019/20 with only one target unmet. The performance of the service in this final year

of the sixth Framework has been impacted by staff capacity in some areas, with a further 5 library service points single staffed and a reduction in the resource budget. It is difficult to envisage how Caerphilly will continue to meet its statutory obligations with further staffing cuts. The impact of funding constraints on service capacity and delivery is something the authority should continue to consider carefully. Forward planning and a strong emphasis on staff development and training has ensured that the service remains resilient and has performed well despite a number of changes.'

- 5.2 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service is assessed as retaining 12/12 of the Core Entitlements in full.
- 5.3 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service has met 7 of the 9 Quality Indicators (QI's) in full, 1 Quality Indicator has been partially met and 1 Quality Indicator has not been met.
- 5.4 The partially met QI is QI13: Staffing Levels and Qualifications and the QI the service fails to meet is QI9: Up-to-Date and Appropriate Reading Material.
- 5.5 After conducting an assessment of all 22 Welsh library authority 2019/2020 WPLS data: 0 authorities fully meet the staffing or professional staffing complement (QI13) and 4 of the 22 meet the criteria for the acquisitions to stock (QI9). This latter target has been identified by the Society of Chief Librarians as unachievable and will be reviewed by the Welsh Government on preparation of the WPLS 7 Framework.
- 5.6 Detailed below are areas of the Assessment Framework that deserve specific mention in respect of good performance achieved by the Borough Library Service in 2019/20.

Performance Indicator	2019/20	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2018/19
QI 1 Making a difference d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	2/19	10%	92%	100%	99%
QI 2 Customer Satisfaction b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	3/18	88%	97%	100%	99%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.4	3/19	8.0	9.2	9.5	9.4
QI 11 Online access * b) computers per capita	14	1/22	4	9	14	14
QI 16 Opening Hours (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	1/22	0.00%	0.23%	3.96%	0.00%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	1/22	0.00%	1.07%	5.41%	0.00%

Rankings- 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing authority)

**High number of terminals the Borough Library Service has available intrinsically linked to a lower performance target*

Further breakdown shows:

<p>Q1 Making a difference : % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills</p> <p>Performance increase from 2018/2019 to 2019/2020 by 1%</p>
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<p>QI 1 Making a difference : % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop their health and well-being</p> <p>Performance increase from 2018/2019 to 2019/2020 by 5%</p>
<p>QI 1 Making a difference : % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives</p> <p>Performance increase from 2018/2019 5 to 2019/2020 by 3%</p>

5.7 Highlighted below are areas of below average performance

Performance Indicator	2019/20	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2018/19
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita *	493	16/22	311	680	1468	685
QI 11 Online access * c) % of available time used by the public	17%	20/22	14%	30%	64%	18%
QI 14 Operational expenditure b) on staff per capita	49%	20/22	48%	61%	77%	49%
on information resources per capita	8%	20/22	5%	13%	22%	11%

* Due to COVID-19, libraries closed their doors to the public on Friday 20th 2020 which impacts true figures

5.8 Making a difference

The Library Service has historically scored positively in areas where we make a difference to people's lives. In their report, the Assessors emphasised the following,

'whilst COVID-19 restrictions remain challenging to all library services in Wales, staff resilience, professionalism and care for the community they serve has been outstanding. Although digital services has increased, we know from evidence provided that customers are missing their library services. They are missing the staff, browsing the shelves, IT provision and community spaces. The importance of the library as a physical place and the impact on the wellbeing of their customers through interaction with library staff cannot be underestimated.'

CIPFA Adult surveys conducted in May 2017 and subsequently in May 2019 saw an increase in 3 of the 4 questions relating to levels of adult satisfaction including the library as a 'a place where adults have found helpful information for health and well-being at the library.'

Customer Satisfaction

As noted above, Caerphilly County Borough Council's Library Service remains popular and respected by the authority's resident population of users of all ages and socio-demographic backgrounds. Scores of 94% for choice of books and 99% for customer care are among the highest quartile in Wales and highlights the range of excellent services residents benefit from.

Support for Individual Development

During 2019/2020, the library service has maintained all 18 library service points and a level of provision to residents. However, MTFP constraints has seen the service increase its number of single staffed service points by 5, making a total of 11/18 now managed by a single member of staff. This will impact on the level of IT 121 support we can provide to residents. Nevertheless, the library service strives to ensure we provide as much support where we can by working closely with external partners such as the EU Settlement Scheme or the Digital Fridays Team. However, moving forward this will certainly bring its challenges.

Support for Health & Wellbeing

Continued library support for the health and wellbeing agenda has seen a 5% CIPFA Adult survey rise in library customers, who have found helpful information for health and well-being at the library (although we still remain below the Welsh median figure). During 2019/20 the library service were active most notably in the following areas:

- Continued financial investment in health and wellbeing materials in all formats including an investment to national schemes such as Reading Well for Mental Health.
- Increased community presence, attendance and guest speaker role by the Libraries Resource and Customer Engagement Manager at:
GP Cluster meetings
Dementia Friendly Community Partnership Board
Caerphilly Integrated Wellbeing Network
Gwent Dementia Friendly Community Conference
- Health service providers using library spaces and continued signposting support by library staff.
- Working in partnership with CCBC Healthy Schools Team to help deliver the Period Dignity Scheme to provide free sanitary products at all our library sites.

Location of Service Points

The Local Authority has maintained its present number and distribution of static libraries where 98% of households are within 2 miles of a static service point.

Library Use

On Friday 20th March 2020, the County Borough Library Service was instructed to close their doors to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Combined with our integration into the all-Wales Library Management System (LMS), key library services were suspended therefore recording, monitoring and reporting performance this year proved challenging:

- The total number of visits reduced by 0.3% from the 2018/19 total. Important to note that should libraries have remained open, this figure would likely have exceeded the previous year's total.
- The total number of external visits to the library's website during the year reduced. Important to note that both the downtime of the LMS upgrade and the preferred customer use of eDigital resource Apps contributed to this reduction.

- There has been a decrease of junior and adult stock loans however it must be noted that due to the LMS upgrade, no issue figures could be recorded from the 16/3/20.
- It has been noted by the Standard's Assessors that other factors may have affected issues. A review of Community Loans was undertaken by Caerphilly in order to effectively plan future lending strategies resulting in the implementation of the School Engagement Programme.

Positive library usage figures reveal:

- The total number of library members increased by 7%.
- Active borrowers during the year remains consistent.
- The total number of eDigital service downloads for eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines and eComics increased by 34%. This is the 3rd year of continued increases in the digital service.

Up-To-Date and Appropriate Reading Material

The authority has not met this standard during 2019/20. However it is important to note that in total, 17/22 Welsh authorities have also failed to meet this standard. This is one of a number of Standards that will be reviewed by Welsh Government prior to the publication of the 7th Framework.

MTFP budget constraints saw a reduction to the annual library resource budget. With prudent and selective resource purchasing, the expenditure on children and young people's resources only decreased by 2% and has also retained the financial contribution to the Welsh language provision. The service remains strongly committed to its strategic aims for children and young adults in order to support the work carried out by the Community Librarians on the School Engagement Programme, Summer Reading Challenge and other national promotions.

Online Access

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service offers the most comprehensive number of Public Access terminals for customer use in Wales. Whilst this ensures local residents can access computer facilities free of charge in their communities, the level of performance achieved is markedly lower than many comparable Local Authority's in Wales. However please note that the lower performance is intrinsically linked to the high number of terminals the Borough Library Service has available along with Wi-Fi provision at all library sites. On a positive note, we are hoping to secure CCBC funding to replenish over 150 of our public PC computers during 2021/2022.

Supply of Requests

During 2019/20 the Borough Library Service received 57,818 requests for specific titles of stock. Caerphilly library service still achieve the requirements for supply of requests over 7 and 15 days.

Staffing Levels & Qualifications

Caerphilly library service partially meets this standard as Qualified leadership is in place in the library staffing structure. The overall target for staff per capita is not

achieved, however it is important to note that no authority in Wales fully meets the staffing or professional staffing standard during 2019/20.

Case Studies

Four case studies on the impact and value of the Borough Library Service were submitted and assessed by the Welsh Government. The case studies reflect the library impact made to an individual or group of individuals through the year. These included:

1. Risca Palace Library IT support – library staff supported a resident in their job search following redundancy. Digital exclusion remains high in the Caerphilly Borough and library services offered at the library allowed the customer to make use of free computer and printing access. The result saw a positive impact on the customer's mental health and well-being.
2. Health and well-being – established to continue our support to the Dementia agenda. One of the projects run at all 18 sites are the loan of carefully assembled *Memory Bags* to carers or customers living with dementia. The scheme enables residents to benefit from the positive effects of reminiscence and helps to connect family members whilst providing support to carers.
3. Welsh language provision – The library service supports two Welsh Reading Groups and a Welsh Scrabble Club. Libraries provide a safe learning environment to learn and develop the Welsh language. As well as hard copy print, our range of eDigital resources are accessible to help to improve the confidence of learners.
4. Blackwood Library Jigsaws – This case study highlighted the positive influence of jigsaws: jigsaws have proven mental health benefits and offer a social benefit. The Jigsaw Club at Blackwood has brought together different sectors in the community and has helped to combat loneliness and isolation. Participants have improved their social, communication and problem solving skills.

Contribution to Council Strategic Priority Themes

A statement on the contribution the Borough Library Service makes to a number of Welsh Government Strategies and Local Authority's priority areas was submitted as part of the 2019/20 return. The Standards Reference Group state,

'Caerphilly has provided a comprehensive overview of the link between library activities and Caerphilly Council and Welsh Government strategies. The breadth of impact on a variety of wellbeing outcomes, such as poverty, social isolation and health and wellbeing is noted.'

Please refer to **Appendix 3** for the impact case studies and strategic statement in Full.

Future Direction

It is noted that Caerphilly is working towards the publication of a new Strategic Plan for 2021/22 and intends to build on its success as a 'community anchor' to residents by ensuring its services remain current and relevant to communities. It is noted that

a new School Engagement Programme has been developed and there are aspirations to support schools to empower and enhance pupil's performance. It is also noted that Caerphilly Libraries are fully committed to improving health and wellbeing.

Conclusion

- 5.9 The Caerphilly County Borough Library Service Annual Welsh Government Standards Assessment 2019/20 has been assessed by the Welsh Reference Panel.
- 5.10 Caerphilly Library Service has been deemed to meet all 12 Core Entitlements, meeting in full 7 QI's, meeting 1 QI's in part with 1 indicator not met in its totality.
- 5.11 The four case studies assessing the impact of library use on people's lives were evaluated and agreed by the Assessor.
- 5.12 A detailed statement highlighting the synergy between library service activities and both the Council's Well-Being Objectives, and the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act was evaluated and agreed by the Assessor.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The report is an **Information Only** item.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications linked to this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications linked to this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report reflects the views of the consultees.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

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Consultees: Cllr. Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member for Learning and Leisure
Cllr. Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Cllr. Carol Andrews, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Christina Harray, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Mark S Williams, Interim Corporate Director – Communities
Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services and Housing
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer, Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 How Good Is Your Public Library Service – A Summary Guide to the Performance Measurement and Assessment Framework For Public Libraries in Wales.
- Appendix 2 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service Final Assessment Report 2019-20
- Appendix 3 Case Studies and Additional Strategic Narrative 2019-20 Annual Standards Return
- Appendix 4 CyMAL - Welsh Public Caerphilly Library Standards - Framework 6, 2019-20