



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 4TH NOVEMBER 2014

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS IN WALES – ANNUAL LIBRARY
UPDATE REPORT 2013-14**

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 4th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards and Performance Indicators, during 2013-14, the concluding year of the improvement scheme in its present format.
- 1.2 Members are asked to note that in respect of a number of Standards detailed in this report the Authority has been judged on its aggregate activity and investment levels over the 3 year Framework timeline in determining whether specific measures have been exceeded or missed. Aggregate performance is particularly relevant in regard to Welsh Public Library Standard (WPLS) 5, Annual Acquisitions, WPLS 6, Annual Expenditure on stock, and WPLS 7, delivery of requested items.
- 1.3 Members are asked to endorse the Welsh Government Public Library Standards Annual Report 2013-14 and request that it be forward to Cabinet for their consideration and approval.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service met or exceeded 8 of 9 Welsh Government Public Library Standards in 2013-14 (see Appendix 1 and 2), an improvement of 2 Standards on the attainment achieved in either 2011-12 or 2012-13. The County Borough's performance is deemed above average, when compared to Wales as a whole. For the purpose of comparison, the average number of Standards achieved by Welsh Library Authorities in 2013-14 was 6.5, the highest number met by an Authority was 9, and the lowest was 4.
- 2.2 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service's Standards attainment was commended by the Welsh Government assessor and peer led Reference Group in the Annual Report for Caerphilly 2013-14 (see Appendix 2), as 'significant and sustained' the result of 'careful planning and the implementation of a development plan'.
- 2.3 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. Library Visits (WPLPI 1), physical and virtual, have increased by 19.6% (173,513) during 2013-14, placing the Authority above the median point in Wales at 9th place overall. There has also been noteworthy, and continued, success in the levels of computer hour use by Borough residents, WPLPI 3, where an increase of 13% (12,303) has been recorded alongside a more modest rise in overall IT occupancy rates to 25% from 23%.

- 2.4 Performance with regard to other Library indicators is mixed with Annual Book and non-book Issues (WPLPI 4) remaining flat at 3.6 loans per resident or 3,606 per 1000 population for 2013-14. Customer satisfaction (WPLPI 2), as reported to Members in 2013, continues to demonstrate the consistently high value that adult, children, and young people attach to the provision currently in place. The Welsh Government assessor recognises the value that residents place on the Authority's investment in its Public Library Service over recent years as reflected in WPLPI 2.
- 2.5 Welsh Public Library Performance Indicator 5, the percentage of annual Library Service expenditure utilised to purchase books and other collection items has improved in 2013-14 (11.23 %) compared to 2012-13 (10.73%). It is however important to note that this increase is closely linked to the significant levels of new materials purchased for the Caerphilly Library and Customer Service Centre development and that future expenditure levels are likely to be affected by the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan and austerity measures.
- 2.6 Welsh Government Standards assessors commended the Authority's for its 'substantial progress' under the Fourth assessment 2011-14 stating:

"Careful planning and appropriate levels of investment have all brought significant benefits to the service and the users...the authority should approach the challenges of the next planning and performance assessment period (2014-17) with considerable confidence, knowing that the approaches adopted to service planning and managing service development hitherto have been the foundations on which it has built a record of considerable success."

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 Single Integrated Plan, 'Caerphilly Delivers'.
- 3.2 The 4th 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 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' and recently adopted 5th Strategic Framework of Public Library Standards, 2014-17, entitled 'Libraries making a difference'.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 **Fourth Assessment Framework for Welsh Public Library Authorities: Caerphilly County Borough Library Service Annual Return 2013-14**
- 4.1.1 The year under review is the third and final performance period assessed as part 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 Authority is commended for achievements linked to the 2009-14, Five Year Development Plan, its Library building improvement programme, and the adoption of a new service strategy for 2014-17 that focuses on 'reading together', e-digital services' and the requirements of the County Borough Medium Term Financial Plan.

4.1.3 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service is deemed to meet 8 of 9 standards (WPLS 1,2,3, 4, 5,6, 7 and 9) whilst partially achieving 1 standard (WPLS 8) that relates to staffing.

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 well above the standard of 95%.

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

The Authority is assessed as continuing to perform well and recognised for its recent reviews of DDA accessible technology and building condition works in respect of disabled users.

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 and has improved markedly on the attainment reached in 2012-13. The reopening of Aberbargoed Library in May 2013 and increases in core hours as part of the Caerphilly and Newbridge developments have led to the increase in attainment achieved overall for 2013-14.

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

All Libraries open 30 hours or more per week now offer free Wireless Internet Access to customers in line with the requirements of this Standard. The investment made by the Authority in WiFi provision during 2013-14, approximately £25k, with the support of the Council's IT Section, who coordinated the installation work, has ensured that this previously partially met standard has been fully achieved in 2013-14 for the first time.

The level and number of public access computer facilities accessible to local residents has risen to 14 PCs per 10,000 population during 2013-14, among the highest allocations in Wales, with enhanced provision included as part of the Newbridge and Caerphilly building developments. A technology refresh has updated all existing public and staff workstations in recent months in line with sector standards.

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 for a second success year. The Authority's aggregate performance over the three-year Framework period, 2011-14, exceeds the standards minimum for adult and children material acquisition totals by a third in each case.

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

This standard is met in full, though expenditure on young people's resources has marginally declined when compared to 2012-13. Aggregate performances over the 2011-14 Framework cycles has remained high and above the UK median point for adult spend and exceeded the top quartile for residents 16 or under. The Welsh Government assessors consider the spend levels as 'very satisfactory' and commends the Council's investment in its materials fund over the 2011-14 period.

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 2013-14, the third year of sustained improvement against each of the reporting timescales. Aggregate performance during 2011-14 reflects this incremental and sustained improvement.

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 below the minimum set, though the Welsh Government assessor recognises that

the service is in the process of a management restructure that may assist in rebalancing this arrangement under the 5th Framework, 2014-17.

4.1.4.9 **WPLS 9, Capital expenditure and buildings (met)**

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 this Standard has been met in full during 2013-14 and for the first time. Due in large part to the significant investment the Authority has made in its Library building stock over recent years the County Borough is assessed by the Welsh Government Standards Reference Panel as follows:

“the authority’s progress and achievements have been remarkable and highly effective. They are therefore also to be highly commended.”

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

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service’s performance indicator achievements remained mixed when 2013-14 outcomes are compared to other years in the 2011-14 Framework periods. Welsh Public Library Performance Indicator (WPLPI) 1, the number of people using the library service per 1,000 resident population increased by 19.6% in 2013-14 (173,513) an achievement which the Welsh Government Standards assessor considers to be linked to the range of improved facilities and services now provided by the Authority, including the impact of co-locating Libraries with other Council provision.

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) have at best remained static when 2013-14 performance is compared to that reported for 2012-13 and indicate a broader decline over the full Framework period (2011-14). Book borrowing per thousand resident population remains below the median for Wales and is a target for improvement in the recently approved 2014-17 Library Service Strategy within the theme of ‘Reading together’. There are however some notable exceptions, Caerphilly Library and Customer Service Centre has seen a book and non-book loan increase of 12% and both Newbridge and Deri have shown marked improvements. Loans to children in particular have driven increases where they have taken place.

Public computer use continues to increase (WPLPI 3) however the percentage of Internet Terminals in continuous use remains below the Welsh average due in large part to the impressive coverage that the Authority has been able to support in recent years, particularly where new or enhanced buildings have been commissioned, leading to fewer periods of total occupancy compared to Councils with more restricted levels of provision.

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 commented upon by the Welsh Government Standards assessors as both ‘notable’ and ‘commendable achievements’ that reflect the Authority’s commitment to its Library Service even in times of financial austerity.

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 There are no financial implications linked to this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications linked to this report.

7.2 For purposes of clarity and completeness Members are asked to note the Library Management Arrangement changes endorsed at Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on June 4th 2014. The revised management staffing structure was implemented on August 1st 2014 and forms an important element of the County Borough Library Services MTFP commitments.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The views of all consultees have been included within this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members note the information received from the County Borough Library Service with regard to its performance for 2013-14 in working towards achieving the 4th 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**. The Authority's attainment of 8 Public Library Standards, above the median for Wales of 6.5, is of particular note and the subject of the assessor's formal commendation.

9.3 That the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee endorses the Welsh Government Public Library Standards Annual Report 2013-14 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.

10.2 To inform Education for Life Scrutiny Members of the progress achieved by the County Borough Library Service in meeting the requirements of the 4th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2011-14.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

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Consultees: Acting Deputy Chief Executive, Sandra Aspinall
Assistant Director Education and Lifelong Learning, Tony Maher
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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 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 24th September 2013. Public Library Standards in Wales – Annual Library Update Report 2012-13

Cabinet 16th October 2013. Public Library Standards in Wales – Annual Library Update Report 2012 - 13

Education for Life Scrutiny Committee 4th June 2014. Restructuring Management Arrangements – County Borough Library Service

Education for Life Scrutiny Committee 8th July 2014. Caerphilly Library Service Strategy 2014-2017

Cabinet 16th July 2014. Caerphilly Library Service Strategy 2014-2017

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Caerphilly Annual Report 2013-14

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 2013-14