EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
8TH NOVEMBER 2016

SUBJECT: **CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S ANNUAL LIBRARY STANDARDS ASSESSMENT 2015-2016**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER**

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 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, Core Entitlements, and Qualitative Indicators, during 2015-16. This is the 2nd year of the new Framework that will operate until March 31st 2017 and includes a number of assessment areas with a focus on outcome and qualitative measures in addition to traditional standards of attainment.

1.2   Education for Life Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse this report.

2.   SUMMARY

2.1   Caerphilly County Borough was assessed as meeting 17 of the 18 Welsh Government Core Entitlements for Public Library Service provision, with one Entitlement met in part, the same performance as last year. The Borough Library Service was deemed as meeting 4 of the 7 Quality Indicators during 2015-16, 3 met in part, and none failed in totality. Quality Indicator performance is lower than that achieved in 2014-15 when 6 were met in full and one partially. This is largely due to budgetary pressures from funding reductions relating to staffing, Book and Non Book Materials allocations, and a modest increase in WiFi provision with one additional Library virtually enabled leaving 5 sites outstanding. The Welsh Government assessors and peer led Reference Group state that whilst Caerphilly County Borough Council Library Service has clearly been affected by the present financial climate that it is "doing well to maintain performance". A copy of the formal Welsh Government assessment is included with this report as **Appendix 1**.

2.2   The Welsh Government Standards Reference Group in assessing Caerphilly County Borough Library Service's submission for 2015-16 identified the following areas of particular strength in the Authority's performance for the year under review:

- Customer satisfaction among adults, children, and young people is among the top quartile for Wales
- The number of active customers per capita are the highest in Wales
- Physical visits per capita remains in the top 3 for Wales
- The supply of requested items within 7 days is 4th highest in Wales
- There were no unplanned Library closures, the best attainment of all 22 Local Authorities

- Evidence provided to the Welsh Government on Library Service impact among its Borough residents was deemed as "excellent" and a narrative statement relating to the strategic contribution made was assessed as "detailed".

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

- Total staffing per capita deemed below the Standard threshold due to Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) commitments and linked opening hour reductions.
- The percentage spend on children's materials whilst above the required level, enabling the Library Service to support Literacy improvements within the County Borough, was deemed as failing to meet the set criteria for resource budget allocations within the 5th Framework as it exceeded the proportion of under 16's resident in Caerphilly.
- WiFi Internet provision available at 13 of the Borough's 18 Libraries is deemed to fail to meet the requirements of Quality Indicator 10, 'Online Access', as provision is required at all static locations.
- Levels of Public computer use have declined by 3% to 25% since 2014-15 ranking Caerphilly as 19th in Wales.
- The percentage of adults who think the Library has made a difference to their lives, 36%, is ranked lowest of the 13 Local Authorities who supplied a return for 2015-16.

2.4 Overall the assessment of the County Borough Council's Public Library Service for 2015-16, whilst largely positive, recognises the financial challenges that have impacted on Standards and Quality Indicator attainment during the year under review.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 The 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2014-2017, assists the Authority in working toward its Strategic Equalities Objectives, in particular:

- Strategic Equality Plan SEO 3- Physical Access
- Strategic Equality Plan SEO 4- Communication
- Strategic Equality Plan SEO 5- Engagement and Participation

3.2 The 5th Strategic Framework of Public Library Standards, 2014-2017, entitled 'Libraries making a difference' links closely with 'Libraries Inspire: The strategic development framework for Welsh libraries 2012-2016'.

3.3 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service through its performance with regard to the 5th Framework of Public Libraries in Wales, 2014-2017, contributes to the goals of the Well-being for Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016 as follows:

- **A prosperous Wales** - Supporting the development of a skilled population with access to a range of materials and information both in book format and electronically, including Digital Skill development.

- **A resilient Wales** – Maximising the shared use of its resources and facilities including a free Borough wide request service and provision of book and non-book materials for loan.

- **A healthier Wales** – Offering a range of resources, including Dementia and Bibliotherapy Mental Health collections available free at all 18 of the Borough's Libraries.

- **A more equal Wales** – Delivering an extensive range of core services free at the point of delivery that are available to all provided, from accessible community centred buildings.

- **A Wales of cohesive communities** – Community anchored Library facilities that are welcoming, safe, and available to all.

- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** – By protecting, promoting, and enhancing residents use and enjoyment of the Borough's heritage, culture, traditions, and language.

- **A globally responsible Wales** – Libraries centred in attractive neutral spaces provided with a clear focus on the environmental and well-being priorities of the Council and the Welsh Government.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 The Welsh Government assessment of Caerphilly County Borough Council's performance against the 5th Standards Framework for Public Libraries in Wales during 2015-2016, concluded that:

> "Caerphilly is doing well to maintain performance in some areas operating in a climate where budget cuts have resulted in reduced levels of staffing and reduced opening hours."

4.2 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service is assessed as meeting 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full and one that relates to online services and Wi-Fi access, in part (**see Appendix 1**).

4.3 There are seven quality indicators that have target measures associated to them of which Caerphilly County Borough Library Service is deemed to have achieved four in full and three in part, a decline from 2014-15 when six indicators were met and one partially completed.

4.4 Detailed below are areas of the assessment Framework that deserve specific mention either in respect of the good performance achieved by the Borough Library Service or where activity levels or other metrics fall below the average for Wales in 2015-2016.

4.5 Highlighted areas of good or excellent performance when compared to other Welsh Local Authorities

Performance indicator	Caerphilly	*Rank*	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	98%	*4/13*	84%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	94%	*3/14*	74%	89%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	*3/14*	90%	97%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall	98%	*5/14*	92%	97%	99%
d) child rating out of ten	9.3	*4/13*	8.0	9.2	9.5
QI 6 Library use					
a) visits per capita	5,263	*3*	2,467	3,967	6,185
c) active borrowers per capita	273	*1*	45	157	273
QI 12 Supply of requests					
a) % available within 7 days	77%	*4*	57%	71%	86%

Performance indicator	Caerphilly	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 16 Opening hours*					
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	1/19	0.00%	0.71%	23.44%

Note: Rankings have been reversed, so that 1st is the lowest scoring Authority.

*Note: Rankings have been reversed, so that 1st is the lowest scoring Authority.

4.6 Making a difference

Caerphilly Libraries are considered welcoming, safe, and enjoyable by both children and adult residents with 98% of those surveyed indicating this view. The Library Service is ranked among the top quartile for Wales a reflection of the continued value that residents have for the Council's significant investment in this area of provision since 2001.

4.7 Customer satisfaction

Caerphilly Library Service is highly rated by residents with regard to customer satisfaction. 98% of residents consider the Borough Library Service to be very good or good taking all elements of provision into account. Libraries are particularly valued by children and young people whilst 99% of adults consulted have assessed the service as very good or good in respect of customer care a testament to the efforts of Borough staff.

4.8 Library Usage

Though Library visits per capita have reduced in 2015-16 the performance reported remains impressive and among the top three within Wales. The range of collaborative services many Library sites offer are well regarded and accessed by a wide range of residents.

4.9 Satisfying customer requests for resources and specific materials effectively and in a timely fashion

The challenging target of supplying requested items within 7 days remains an area of good performance with a small decline from 78% satisfied during 2014-15. The quality of Library stock and its integrated delivery system are largely responsible for the continued attainment noted for 2015-16.

4.10 Unplanned Library closures

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service was the best performing Authority with regard to maintaining public access to its facilities within a welsh context. The impact of reduced opening hours and staffing levels were managed in a professional manner ensuring the public were not disadvantaged from unexpected temporary Library closures.

4.11 Highlighted areas of below average performance

Performance indicator	Caerphilly	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) new skills	24%	12/13	23%	72%	92%
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	86%	12/12	86%	93%	99%
c) health and well-being	26%	13/13	26%	58%	93%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	36%	13/13	36%	87%	97%
QI 6 Library use					

Performance indicator	Caerphilly	*Rank*	Lowest	Median	Highest
b) virtual visits per capita	438	19	340	976	2,475
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public					
a) equipment	25%	19	20%	31%	68%

4.12 **Making a difference (Skills, health and well-being, quality of life)**

Caerphilly Library Service ranks lowly with regard to customer impact in respect of skill acquisition, ranking 12th of 13 reporting Councils, and with regard to its health and well-being contribution ranking 13th of thirteen. It is important to note however that Caerphilly Library Service undertook questionnaires across all 18 of its sites surveying some 2,750 users to a nationally recognised and independently verified standard that many Welsh Local Authorities have elected to withdraw from or deliver in house often with smaller catchment populations participating.

4.13 **Utilisation of public Internet terminals**

There has been a decline in the number of computer hours used by the public and the occupancy percentage reported for the Authority in 2015-16. Performance with regard to Public Internet use was 28% in 2014-15 three percent higher than the year under review however the Authority maintains its modest ranking of 19th in Wales. The Borough Library Service offers access to 250 public computers, amongst the highest allocation within Wales, and this impacts the occupancy percentages reported. It is important to note that users are able to access modern and well provisioned Internet facilities assisting with their recreational, educational; and work related online needs.

4.14 **Library virtual usage**

The 2015-16 Annual Standards return highlights a marked drop in virtual visits per capita. The performance achieved is disappointing however the Library Service's virtual offer has undertaking a process of transition and enhancement, including the adoption of a Library Smart Phone Application that should support the Council to improve its virtual usage levels during the final Framework year of 2016-17.

4.15 **Impact Studies and Contribution to Borough Council strategic priority themes**

Four case studies on the impact and value of the Borough Library Service were submitted and assessed by the Welsh Government Reference Group panel. The case studies were as follows:

- Shared reading sessions in a care home which have encouraged greater interaction between residents
- An Autistic child who has begun to participate in library activity sessions which are helping him come out of his shell
- Comments from members of a workplace reading group on the impact it has had on their well-being
- A lady whose research into a family heirloom has opened up a new interest in family history

4.16 The Welsh Government Reference Group commended Caerphilly County Borough Council for the 'excellent' case study submissions provided stating that they demonstrated the 'real difference' the Library Service has made to residents lives.

4.17 A statement on the contribution the Borough Library Service makes to the Authority's Single Integrated Plan in addition to a number of Welsh Government strategies including the Well being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016 and plans that relate to the areas of Poverty, National Literacy Programme, Early Years provision, Community Learning, and Library delivery, was also submitted as part of the service Standards return for 2015-2016.

5. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

5.1 The County Borough Library Service through its performance in seeking to meet the Welsh Government's 5th Framework of Public Library Standards also contributes to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016 by its clear focus on:

- Long Term strategic priority attainment delivered via a standards regime that has been in place since 2001 and that will continue to provide national and local core foci until 2020.

- Integrated and co-located services that seek to deliver across a range of Borough and National priorities.

- Collaborating with other Borough Council services, local groups, and other agencies to provide residents with a range of coherent facilities.

-

-
- Involving residents and other stakeholders in decision making, planning, and evaluating the Library Services that the Council provides.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 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.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The cost to implement free Wi-Fi access at the remaining 5 sites, Quality Indicator 10b, that have no provision at present is approximately £37k to £43k. No capital funding has been identified to undertake these enhancements to date.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no personnel implications linked to this report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

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

10.   RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1   Members note the information received from the County Borough Library Service with regard to its performance for 2015-2016 in working towards achieving the 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2014-2017.

10.2   Members should also note the Welsh Government's Public Library Standard Reference Group assessment of this performance **See Appendix 1.** The Authority's attainment of 17 Core Entitlements and 4 Quality Indicators that have target levels of attainment.

10.3   That the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee endorses the Welsh Government Public Library Standards Annual Report 2015-2016.

11.   REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1   Consult and seek the views of the Scrutiny Committee to meet the requirements of the Welsh Government Public Library Standards by 2017.

11.2   To inform Education for Life Scrutiny Members of the progress achieved by the County Borough Library Service in meeting the requirements of the 5th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2014-2017.

12.   STATUTORY POWER

12.1   Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Author: Gareth Evans, Interim Manager Community Education

Consultees: Chris Burns, Interim Chief Executive
               Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
               Bleddyn Hopkins, Assistant Director, 21st Century Schools
               Councillor Derek Havard Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning
               Councillor Wynne David, Chair, Education for Life Scrutiny Committee
               Councillor James Pritchard, Vice-Chair, Education for Life Scrutiny Committee
               Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager - Education
               Russell Allen, Senior Legal Assistant
               Sian Phillips, HR Manager
               Kathryn Peters, Corporate Policy Manager
.
Background Papers:

Education for Life Scrutiny Committee 3rd November 2015. Caerphilly County Borough Council's Annual Library Standards Assessment 2014-2015.

Cabinet 9th December 2015. Caerphilly County Borough Council's Annual Library Standards Assessment 2014-2015.

Appendices:
APPENDIX 1:   WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS 2014-17 CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2015-16

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Caerphilly C. B. Council

Annual Assessment Report 2015-16

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Caerphilly's annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to Museums, Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government.

1) Executive summary

Caerphilly met 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full, and partially met 1. This is unchanged from last year.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Caerphilly achieved 4 in full and 3 in part. This is a drop in performance compared to last year, when 6 were met in full.

Caerphilly is doing well to maintain performance in some areas operating in a climate where budget cuts have resulted in reduced levels of staffing and reduced opening hours. The impact of these cuts is already evident in falling usage and performance. Further cuts are likely to impact on front line service delivery, and will require careful planning to minimise negative effects.

- Four case studies provided good evidence of the impact of the service, although some of the quantitative measures of impact were low. 95% of attendees at training sessions said that they had been helped to achieve their goals.

- Customer satisfaction is high, with all indicators in the top five of authorities who have completed surveys so far in the current framework. Attendance at training sessions is above the median for Wales, and informal training has increased compared to last year.

- Cuts to opening hours and staffing have impacted on use, although the numbers of members and of active borrowers per capita are the highest in Wales. Usage of electronic resources is increasing, but remains below the median for Wales as a whole.

- Targets for acquisitions per capita, replenishment rate, and materials in the Welsh language have all been met, with Children's materials being prioritised strategically. ICT provision appears to be under-utilised, and five service points do not provide Wi-Fi access, although there are plans to improve this next year.

- A staffing review has reduced overall levels, and this target has not been met this year. It seems unlikely that there will be any improvement in this area during the course of the current framework. No detailed financial data were provided at the time of preparing this report. Opening hours have been reduced compared to last year, but continue to meet the target, and are above the median for Wales as a whole. There were no unplanned closures this year, an improvement over last year.

Considering the four areas in the framework (*Customers and communities; Access for all; Learning for life;* and *Leadership and development*) in comparison to the rest of Wales, Caerphilly generally performs well in the area of *Learning for life*, with a more mixed performance in other areas.

APPENDIX 1: WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS 2014-17 CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2015-16

Compared to the previous year, the impact of budget cuts can clearly be seen in many of the indicators, despite the best efforts of the service to mitigate these.

2) Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against the core entitlements, the quality indicators which have targets, the quality indicators showing performance against others, and impact measures. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is made in Section 3.

a) Core entitlements

Caerphilly is meeting 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full, and partially meeting 1. The only area where Caerphilly is not achieving the core entitlement falls within the area of *Learning for life*, where it is partially meeting the entitlement to free use of the internet and computers, including Wi-Fi, which is only available in 13 of the authority's 18 service points at present, compared to 12 last year.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Caerphilly is achieving 4 in full and 3 in part:

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	✔	
b) Skills training	✔	
c) Information literacy	✔	
d) E-government support	✔	
e) Reader development	✔	
QI 5 Location of service points	✔	Met in full
QI 8 Up-to-date reading material:		Met in full
a) Acquisitions per capita	✔	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	✘	
b) Replenishment rate	✔	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Partially met
a) % of material budget on children	✘	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✔	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	✔	
QI 10 Online access:		Partially met
a) All service points	✔	
Computers per capita	✔	
b) Wi-Fi provision	✘	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
a) Staff per capita	✘	
b) Professional staff per capita	✔	
c) Head of service qualification/training	✔	
d) CPD percentage	✔	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✔	Met in full

This is a poorer performance than last year, when QI 9 and QI 13 were both met in full; however, the missed target in QI 9 is due to over-provision proportionally, rather than a deficit.

c) Impact measures

The framework contains three indicators which seek to gather evidence of the impact that using the library service has on people's lives. Through these and other indicators it is possible to see how the library service is contributing towards educational, social, economic and health and wellbeing local and national agendas. These indicators do not have targets. Not all authorities collected data for the impact indicators, and ranks are included out of the numbers of respondents stated, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Caerphilly carried out customer surveys of adults in April 2015, and of children in July 2014, using the CIFA PLUS surveys.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	86%	12/12	86%	93%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	36%	13/13	36%	87%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a		57%	73%	93%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	95%	12/17	85%	97%	100%

Caerphilly provided 4 excellent impact case studies which showed the real difference the library service makes:

- Shared reading sessions in a care home which have encourage greater interaction between residents

- An autistic child who has begun to participate in library activity sessions which are helping him come out of his shell

- Comments from members of a workplace reading group on the impact it has had on their well-being

- A lady whose research into a family heirloom has opened up a new interest in family history

d) Quality performance indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow performance to be compared between authorities. The following table summarises Caerphilly's position for 2015-16. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are obtained from customer surveys which only need to be carried out once during the three year framework period, or those where relevant data elements were not available to some authorities. Figures reported in respect of last year for QI 4 to QI 16 are repeated for convenience of comparison. Note that indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population.

APPENDIX 1: WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS 2014-17 CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2015-16

Performance indicator		*Rank*	Lowest	Median	Highest	*2014/15*	*Rank*
QI 1 Making a difference							
a) new skills	24%	*12/13*	23%	72%	92%		
c) health and well-being	26%	*13/13*	26%	58%	93%		
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	98%	*4/13*	84%	97%	100%		
QI 2 Customer satisfaction							
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	94%	*3/14*	74%	89%	97%		
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	*3/14*	90%	97%	99%		
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall	98%	*5/14*	92%	97%	99%		
d) child rating out of ten	9.3	*4/13*	8.0	9.2	9.5		
QI 4 User training							
a) attendances per capita	47	*6*	5	30	390	22	*13*
c) informal training per capita	96	*15/18*	3	201	1017	16	*21 / 21*
QI 6 Library use							
a) visits per capita	5,263	*3*	2,467	3,967	6,185	5,826	*2*
b) virtual visits per capita	438	*19*	340	976	2,475	599	*18*
c) active borrowers per capita	273	*1*	45	157	273	288	*1*
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	303	*5*	60	223	666	317	*5*
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public							
a) equipment	25%	*19*	20%	31%	68%	28%	*20*
b) Wi-Fi services	55%	*5/8*	20%	60%	90%	38%	*4 / 8*
QI 12 Supply of requests							
a) % available within 7 days	77%	*4*	57%	71%	86%	78%	*4*
b) % available within 15 days	86%	*10*	71%	86%	96%	91%	*2*
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications							
(v) a) total volunteers	12	*14*	0	18	103	17	*8*
b) total volunteer hours	360	*15*	0	582	3,699	510	*12*
QI 14 Operational expenditure							
a) total expenditure per capita	n/a		£7,516	£12,749	£18,760	£15,728	*7*
b) % on staff	n/a		40%	58%	79%	64%	*5*
% on information resources	n/a		7%	13%	23%	13%	*10*
% on equipment and buildings	n/a		1%	3%	20%	3%	*14*
% on other operational costs	n/a		0%	20%	39%	19%	*13*
c) capital expenditure per capita	n/a		£0	£272	£4,677	£0	*16*
QI 15 Net cost per visit	n/a		£1.83	£2.43	£3.53	*	
QI 16 Opening hours *(see note)*							
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	*1*	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	0.0%	*1*
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	*1/19*	0.00%	0.71%	23.44%	0.3%	*8 / 19*

Note: Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.
* Income data for 2014-15 not available to calculate this figure.

3) Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators are divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance against the quality indicators within these four areas, and

APPENDIX 1: WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS 2014-17 CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2015-16
compares results with those from the first year of the framework.

a) *Customers and communities*

Caerphilly undertook a user survey of children in July 2014, and of adults in April 2015. Customer satisfaction is high in both cases, although the impact indicators are disappointing and, amongst the lowest in Wales. All service points provide the full range of support for individual development. Attendance at training sessions has increased compared to last year, and the level of informal training has also increased.

b) *Access for all*

Caerphilly meets the target for physical access to service points. Visits to library premises have fallen by 10% compared to last year, probably as a result of the 15% reduction in opening hours, but remain the third highest per capita in Wales. Virtual visits have fallen by a quarter compared to last year; the authority attributes this to improved access via a tablet/smartphone app which has reduced the number of visits via the CCBC website, and which are currently not captured in the usage data. Caerphilly continues to have the highest rate of membership and of active borrowers in Wales, although issues have fallen over the year, linked to the reductions in opening hours and staffing – which have also affected library events and activities. Use of electronic materials has increased by nearly 50%, but remains below the median for Wales as a whole.

c) *Learning for life*

Caerphilly is meeting the targets for acquisitions per capita, replenishment rate, and materials in the Welsh language. It spent 23% of the budget on material for children compared to a population proportion of 19%. As this indicator is measured through proportional range, rather than a minimum, the service misses this indicator, however, this reflects the strategic priority given to this area of the service. It continues to maintain its ICT provision, although only 13 of the 18 service points provide Wi-Fi access at present (compared to 12 last year). The service has secured funding to investigate expanding provision to all sites by the end of 2016/17. Use of ICT equipment remains relatively low, with only three authorities recording a lower rate of use this year. There has been a drop in the percentage of requests met within 7 and particularly 15 days, following a 28% increase in the number of requests, and longer waiting times for popular material.

d) *Leadership and development*

Having met all targets in this area last year, a review of staffing has brought overall levels below the target this year. Professional staffing continues to meet the target, and the head of service is a Chartered Librarian. The service has reduced its number of volunteers slightly, to 12, who gave an average of 30 hours each – the same as last year. Volunteering opportunities are offered only as work experience placements, under two schemes, and the service is working towards NOS accreditation.

Caerphilly was unable to provide financial information other than in respect of spending on materials at the time of preparing this report. Opening hours have been reduced following a review, but continue to meet the target set. There were no unplanned closure or missed home deliveries during the year.

4) Strategic context

APPENDIX 1: WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS 2014-17 CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2015-16

The service provided a detailed statement describing how services are aligned to both the priorities and strategic objectives of the council, and a range of Welsh Government priorities including Libraries Inspire, priorities for tackling poverty, the Programme for Government, and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

5) Future direction

A review will be undertaken in 2016-17 and the future direction of the service established. This will aim to identify how further savings can be made minimising negative effects. The service notes that as a result it is unlikely to be in a position to meet either of the staffing level targets in the foreseeable future.

6) Conclusion

Caerphilly is doing well to maintain performance in some areas operating in a climate where budget cuts have resulted in reduced levels of staffing and reduced opening hours. The impact of these cuts is already evident in falling usage and performance. Further cuts are likely to impact on front line service delivery, and will require careful planning to minimise negative effects.