
LIBRARIES PERFORMANCE AND UNIVERSAL OFFERS UPDATE

Report Overview

1. This report is split into two sections, providing Members with appropriate information to consider the following areas of:
 - Section A: Welsh Public Library Standards – Annual Report 2016/17
 - Section B: Chief Librarians Universal Offers update.

A. WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS – ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

2. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide library services under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Welsh Government launched the first set of Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) for Welsh authorities in 2001. This set of national standards generated comparative performance information to support improvements and greater efficiency in libraries. Since then, the Welsh Government has issued further sets of WPLS, each building on the improvements generated by the previous set.
3. The fifth quality framework of Welsh Public Standards 2014-2017 – *‘Libraries Making a Difference’* has been developed to monitor how well library services deliver benefits such as literacy, digital inclusion, cohesive communities, and health and well-being. This framework has moved away from the standards and performance indicators used in previous years and has instead introduced core entitlements, quality indicators and indicators to measure the impact of library services. The full document can be found via the following link:
<http://gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/museums-archives-libraries/libraries/public-library-standards/?lang=en>

4. The desired outcome of the fifth framework is that libraries deliver all the services and facilities listed as core entitlements. The framework has been themed around four areas of core service, each of which has a number of core entitlements. The core services and related entitlements are listed in **Appendix A**. The framework also contains 16 quality indicators, of which seven have targets, and three impact measures.

5. Every year, Cardiff Council submits an annual return to the Welsh Government, detailing how it has met the core entitlements and providing information against quality indicators and impact measures. The Welsh Government undertakes an assessment of the return and provides a report on this, summarising performance. The report for 2016/17 is attached at **Appendix B** and shows performance against the quality indicators and impact measures, including comparator data with other Welsh library services.

Annual Report 2016/17

6. The evaluation found that:
 - Cardiff is meeting all 18 core entitlements in full
 - Of the seven quality indicators which have targets, Cardiff achieved four in full and three in part (*in 2015/16 Cardiff achieved three in full, two in part and did not achieve two*)
 - The main areas of concern are low levels of staffing and investment in resources, reflected in below-average customer satisfaction levels compared to other library services.

7. The three quality indicators which were partially met were:
 - Quality indicator 8: Up-to-date reading material:
 - Acquisitions per capita
 - Materials spend per capita
 - Quality indicator 10: Online Access
 - Computers per capita
 - Quality Indicator 13: Staffing levels and qualifications
 - Staff per capita
 - Professional staff per capita.

8. The impact measures are detailed on page 3 of the annual assessment report, attached at **Appendix B** and show how Cardiff measures against other library services in Wales.
9. Highlights from the commentary of the assessment report include:
- User surveys show high levels of satisfaction amongst children, although adult satisfaction levels are below the median for Wales as a whole.
 - Attendance at formal training, and rates of informal training per capita, have increased and are amongst the highest in Wales.
 - Physical visits have increased for the second consecutive year, possibly because of more co-located sites, and there have been increases in rates of membership and active borrowers. Opening hours increased compared to last year and Cardiff has met the target this year.
 - Use of audio-visual and electronic collections remains low.
 - There has been a welcome increase in acquisitions and the targets for replenishment rate, materials for children and materials in the Welsh language have all been met this year.
 - ICT provision has fallen temporarily due to refurbishment at one location but there has been an increase in usage levels.
 - Professional staffing levels are amongst the lowest in Wales, with overall staffing levels also below median. The service makes extensive use of volunteers.
 - The proportion of the budget spent on other operational costs has fallen compared to last year.
 - The figures suggest the service is operating efficiently, with total spending per capita above the median for Wales, but net cost per visit is again the lowest in Wales at £1.50.
10. The concluding remarks of the Annual Assessment report state *“There are some welcome improvements in Cardiff’s performance this year, despite further extensive budget cuts. Concerns remain over continued low staffing, and investment in resources, which are reflected in below average customer satisfaction levels compared to other library services. Possible outcomes of the Hub strategy include increases in some measures of library usage, and the service is also actively engaging on digital and health and wellbeing agendas’.*

Previous Scrutiny

11. The Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee monitored performance against the Welsh Public Libraries Standards fourth and fifth frameworks across 2012-15. Members raised the following recurring scrutiny issues during this period:

- staffing levels in libraries in Cardiff are a chronic issue with Cardiff being in the lowest quartile for the whole of Wales;
- qualification levels of staff are below the WLPS standard; and
- the levels of new stock acquisitions have been an area of concern.

B. THE SOCIETY OF CHIEF LIBRARIANS: UNIVERSAL OFFERS UPDATE

12. The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL)¹ has worked with key partners, including The Arts Council and The Reading Agency, to identify six key areas of service regarded by service users as integral to public libraries. These areas of service are: reading; information; digital; health; learning; and culture.

13. SCL and partners have developed a 'universal offer' for each of these areas, providing a positive vision for the future of public libraries. Each offer is underpinned by the Six Steps initiative, which ensures access for people with visual impairments, and the Children's Promise, which sets out how libraries engage with children and young people as they grow. Further information is available via the hyperlinks below and at: <http://goscl.com/universal-offers/>

- [Reading Offer](#)
- [Information offer](#)
- [Digital offer](#)
- [Health offer](#)
- [Learning offer](#)
- [Culture Offer](#)

14. A poster for the Universal Offers 2018 is attached at **Appendix C**, for Members information.

¹ The Society of Chief Librarians leads and manages public libraries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. SCL is made up of the head of service of every library authority, and advocates for continuous improvement of the public library service on behalf of local people.

Way Forward

15. Councillor Lynda Thorne (Cabinet Member – Housing and Communities) will attend, and may wish to make a statement. The following officers will be in attendance to provide a presentation on each section and to answer Members' questions:
 - Sarah McGill (Director – Communities, Housing & Customer Services)
 - Jane Thomas (Assistant Director – Housing and Communities)
 - Nicola Pitman (Central Library Manager).

16. The presentations will be circulated ahead of the meeting; the presentation on the Universal Offers will provide information on how libraries are performing against each offer.

Legal Implications

17. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

18. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

Recommendation

19. The Committee is recommended:
 - a. to consider whether it wishes to pass on any comments, observations or recommendations to the Cabinet;
 - b. to discuss whether it wishes to schedule any further scrutiny of these issues.

Davina Fiore
Director of Governance and Legal Services
5 January 2018

The following Appendices are attached:

Appendix A: *Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17: core services and entitlements*

Appendix B: *Fifth Assessment Framework for Welsh Public Library Standards: Annual Return 2016/17*

Appendix C: *Universal Offers 2018 poster*