

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 NOVEMBER 2015

Present: County Councillor McKerlich(Chairperson)
County Councillors Dilwar Ali, Govier, Howells, Javed, Stubbs
and Weaver

36 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hyde.

37 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A Declaration of Interest was received from Councillor Weaver:

Councillor Weaver declared a personal interest in the agenda as a whole as he is the Assistant Cabinet Member for Libraries.

38 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

39 : WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS 5TH FRAMEWORK - ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Bradbury, Cabinet Member: Community Development, Co-Operatives and Social Enterprise, Sarah McGill Director – Communities, Housing & Customer Services and Isabelle Bignall Head of Service - Customer Services and Nicola Richards Central Library Manager to the Committee meeting.

Members were provided with a presentation by Isabelle Bignall which included information on The Fifth Quality Framework 2014-2017; Framework 5 – Year 1; Core Entitlements; Quality Indicators with Set Targets (All Fully Met); Quality Indicators with Set Targets – Partially Met; Wi-Fi Headlines; Quality Indicators – Not Met; WPLSQI9 – Appropriate Reading Material; Quality Indicators – Benchmarking and Annual Assessment Highlights;

The Chairperson thanked Isabelle Bignall for her presentation and invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members asked if targets set by Welsh Government restricts the vision for libraries for the future, with particular reference to e-learning rather than physical footfall. The Cabinet Member noted that some Performance Indicators (PI's) are historic, such as PC use in libraries which doesn't take into account people using for example the digital suite or their own portable devices in Cardiff Central Library Hub. He added that other standards needed to be looked at in the current financial position, such as judging on opening hours when the Council cannot afford to staff the libraries for longer opening hours.

- Members asked how Officers considered they could close the digital divide and ensure every household in Cardiff has access to e-learning. The Cabinet Member stated that this was a crucial part of the Hubs Strategy and internet use at Hubs was increasing. Officers added that the Digital suite at Cardiff Central Library Hub was Wi-Fi enabled and there was also now a Wi-Fi enabled travelling library. Officers stressed that digital learning was a priority.
- Members asked what form of Survey was needed to meet the partially met core entitlement standard and whether non library users would be included. Officers advised that lots of informal surveys are already undertaken however Welsh Government require a CIPFA survey to be conducted; non library users will be asked, they are also asked in the Ask Cardiff survey and when hub research is being undertaken.
- Members noted the failed standard for replenishment of stock and asked if this had an effect on the wait time for popular items. Officers stated that they don't have complaints about wait time, they have lots of stock in the libraries and any extra stock would cause an issue with storage so they don't see this as a problem at the moment; they use space for bring your own devices. The Cabinet Member added that the book fund had been protected for two years.
- Members noted that the Staffing standard was not compliant and that MALD only funded part of this, and asked if this standard needed to be changed to reflect hubs etc. The Cabinet Member stated that he would feed back the comments about standards meeting the current service provision to the Welsh Government.
- Members asked whether there was capability with the WIFI to cope with increased visitors. Officers explained that historically libraries used to be on the Council WIFI network, however now they were connected to the unlimited super connected WIFI so there should not be any capacity issues.
- With regards to the Mobile Library service, Members asked if this service was going to be increased. Officers explained that the old Mobile Library Vehicle was no longer fit for purpose; Monmouthshire's Mobile Library Vehicle had been purchased and rebranded, this would pick up the stops previously visited and some extra but there would be no further increase in provision. CyMal (MALD) grant would be used to bid for the mobile service.
- Members noted that Roath Library had been closed for over a year; local Members had been promised mitigations with relation to drop off points etc. and nothing had been heard since. The Cabinet Member apologised and stated that lots had been outside of the control of the Council; officers had been told that it has to happen though and he offered to meet with the local Member separately about this. Officers added that Plasnewydd Community Centre would have been the ideal location to offer an alternative provision but it was not in Roath; Officers had explored options with St German's church including parking the Mobile Library there, but this was not feasible due to the £20k charge they had quoted; however boxes of books were now left in the Church for residents to use and the Mobile Library visits there.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Member, officers and other witnesses for attending the meeting, giving their presentations and statements and for answering Members questions.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes on the Committee’s behalf to the Cabinet Member to convey their comments and observations. [View Letter](#)

40 : CARDIFF CENTRAL LIBRARY HUB

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Bradbury, Cabinet Member: Community Development, Co-Operatives and Social Enterprise, Sheila Hendrickson Brown Chief Executive of the Cardiff Third Sector Council, Sarah McGill Director – Communities, Housing & Customer Services, Isabelle Bignall Head of Service - Customer Services and Nicola Richards Central Library Manager to the committee meeting.

The Chairperson invited questions from Sheila Hendrickson Brown as part of the pilot for allowing public questions at Scrutiny. The questions were as follows:

‘Can you outline how far the performance of local hubs has met the objectives set out in the Hubs Strategy, and what impact they have had on service delivery, compared to the way services were delivered previously?’

The Cabinet Member responded saying; When originally establishing the concept of Community Hubs, the vision was that “Cardiff’s citizens will be able to access the services they need in the way they want to, through joined up services and closer working between The City of Cardiff Council and its partners.”

The Community Hubs concept was built on 4 key principles:

- Wherever possible, hubs will bring together existing council and partner services within one building. This will provide efficiencies in the use of staff and buildings, and allow reinvestment in customer services.
- Hubs will be implemented in accordance with the co-operative values and principles by engaging communities and partners in the planning and delivery of local services.
- There will be at least one hub in each neighbourhood partnership area, however, there may be more than one where the area requires it. They will also be tailored to the local area, based on needs analysis and consultation. There will not be a ‘one size fits all’ approach.
- Hubs should be in locations which are easily accessible, for example in existing district centres and should have good public transport links. Where possible, revenue savings will be made, however, some capital will be available for the development of buildings.

He added that he believes that this Hubs concept has been hugely successful and at a time when councils could have pushed more and more services online or over the phone, we recognised the importance of offering more complex transactions face to face. The number of people using the service, customer feedback, as well as

support and recognition from Welsh Government has shown that there is demand for face to face service.

Successes of the service were outlined as:

- The number of customers that visit our Hubs with either Benefit or Housing specific queries continues to increase month on month.
- Over 1,000 customers visit the Ely / Caerau Hub with benefit queries each month and a further 400-500 with queries that relate to housing need.
- Our Money Advice Team based at the City Centre Hub has led to savings of almost £300,000 in 2014/15 and over £5,000,000 weekly benefit gained during 2014/15.
- Over 63,000 internet bookings were made at our Ely / Caerau Hub and this represents a 99% increase when compared to the previous year. It is equally successful at other hubs with Llanrumney and St Mellons receiving 25,000 and 20,000 internet bookings respectively.
- Llanrumney Hub had 32,000 books issued in 2014/15, an average of 2,668 books were borrowed each month and 469 new people became a member of our libraries during 2014/15.
- St Mellons Hub had over 64,000 books issued in 2014/15, an average of 5,367 books were borrowed each month and 787 new people became a member of our libraries during 2014/15.
- Ely/Caerau Hub had over 47,000 books issued in 2014/15, an average of 3,966 books were borrowed each month and over 1,200 new people became a member since re-opening in June 2014.
- Butetown Hub had over 1,000 books issued in 2014/15, an average of 84 books were borrowed each month.

All this was achieved through bringing together services into a single building enabling revenue savings to the council. To date, this has achieved revenue savings of £1.4 million.

There are some exciting new Hubs, either currently being redeveloped or in the planning process:

- Grangetown Hub - construction is due for completion in December
- STAR Hub - contractor appointed and a 57 week build due for completion September 2016
- Llandaff North & Gabalfa Hub - construction due for completion December 2016
- Fairwater Hub - construction planned for January to April 2016
- Rumney Partnership Hub - will be completed later this month on the 23rd November.

Sheila Hendrickson Brown asked a question : 'Will there be opportunities for the third sector to contribute to the evaluation of the Hubs Strategy, and to put forward proposals for mitigating unintended consequences or gaps in service delivery?'

The Cabinet Member responded saying; We are already regularly in contact with and open to ideas from all possible third sector partners – for example we are currently discussing with RNIB Cymru the potential to assist in their delivery of workshops.

There is also potential to assist with the distribution of information and support for people with sight and/or hearing loss.

Now that the Hubs model has been in place for sometime and we want to maximise the outcomes from the new Central Library Hub, it would be timely to undertake a review with our partners to see how we can work together. It would be good to do this in partnership with Cardiff Third Sector Council and we will be in touch shortly to arrange this.

Sheila Hendrickson Brown added that she had concerns to ensure that, notwithstanding the clear increased use of libraries secured through hub developments and the positive outcomes that are being achieved, she asked for clarity of the steps that are in place to provide the assurance that no-one is being left behind; that arrangements are in place to support those people who might not be using the services that they used to use, before procurement activity was undertaken to arrange hubs.

She referred as examples relevant to the Service Hub to people who might have used the service when the Somali Advice Centre was in the Advice Hub and provided heritage language support. She also mentioned older people who might have used at home services provided through Age Connects that might not be still provided or not provided to the levels they were previously.

In response, Cllr Bradbury said that, while he supported the procurement arrangements that had been made, he would be pleased to meet Sheila to discuss the specific examples cited.

The Chairperson thanked Sheila Hendrickson Brown for her contribution to the Committee.

Members received a presentation from Isabelle Bignall on the Central Library Hub Case Study which included information on Background; The Move; The New Central Library Hub; Re-purposed Technology; New Technology; Central Library Hub Services and Priorities.

The Chairperson thanked Isabelle Bignall for her presentation and invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members asked if Officers were confident that the service was sustainable and asked if opening times and self service out of hours had been explored. The Cabinet Member explained that there were already innovative self service initiatives taking place; with regards to sustainability he added that all Hubs have had business cases to make sure they are sustainable for the next five years at least; they have plugged a gap that the Council could not fill in the current budgetary position. With reference to Central Library Hub he stated that this was considered more sustainable as it had more income generating opportunities. Officers added that one of the drivers behind Hubs was the increase in people wanting advice/first point of contact etc. with this increased footfall it was important that there were sustainable places for council services to be provided.

- Members offered their congratulations on what has been achieved so far; noted that Central was very technology driven and asked if Officers were confident in the resources, technology and connectivity there. Officers advised that they had made sure when they developed a digital floor at Central, that there was a separate very reliable network; there were three networks there, a Council network, a Business network and Public Wi-Fi, no problems had been reported so far. With regard to staffing the floor, staff had been brought in who were very digital savvy and helpful to the public; it was noted that more staff would be ideal so they were working with the Into Work team to explore this.
- A Member was concerned about access to the Central Library Hub for less able people; noting that there were no easy drop off points or disabled parking bays near by. The Cabinet Member offered to speak with the Member outside of the meeting to listen to any concerns.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Member, officers and other witnesses for attending the meeting, giving their presentations and statements and for answering Members questions.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes on the Committee’s behalf to the Cabinet Member to convey their comments and observations. [View Letter](#)

41 : LIBRARY STOCK MANAGEMENT

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Bradbury, Cabinet Member: Community Development, Co-Operatives and Social Enterprise, Sarah McGill Director – Communities, Housing & Customer Services and Isabelle Bignall Head of Service - Customer Services to the committee meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which he noted that this was a genuine pre-decision scrutiny and he was keen to take Committee’s views to Cabinet. He stated that there was a real need to reform this service, there was a huge amount of stock locked away in Dominions Way which was very costly to the Council; this stock needed to be made accessible and consideration needed to be given to where it could be housed. An option was to use one wing of Cathays Library, local Members have been consulted on this. A stakeholder group would hopefully be established to determine what to do with the rest of the stock going forward.

Members were provided with a presentation from Sarah McGill on the Libraries Stock Management Strategy and Local Studies Service, which included information on: Current position on Cardiff Library Service and Dominions Way Services; Issues/Opportunities; Stock Management – Historical ‘legacy’ Collections and Recommendations.

The Chairperson thanked Sarah McGill for her presentation and invited questions and comments from Members:

- Members asked if temperature controlled rooms would be needed in Cathays Library for storing some of the books. Officers advised they wouldn’t be

needed for the books that would be transferred there, they added that a consultant would be engaged to advise on collections and their environments.

- Members asked if the space required would remain constant or would it need to grow over the years. Officers advised that currently there was a lot of information on Microfiche and the Microfiche machines were quite large, some would remain but over the years there would be increased digitisation.
- Members asked whether there was any value in the collections and whether some could be sold. The Cabinet Member stated that moving some of the collection to Cathays Library would benefit Cathays Library going forward; local groups have huge interest in certain collections and it was important to engage with them now to determine how they are dealt with in the future. Officers added that lots of the collections would have been gifted to the Council and would have had a caveat that they cannot be sold. Savings would be made from the costs of Dominions Way.
- Members discussed the possibility of renting out the Art Collection as happens in Stuttgart. The Cabinet Member stated that nothing was off the table in terms of maximising the enjoyment of the items in the future.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Member, officers and other witnesses for attending the meeting, giving their presentations and statements and for answering Members questions.

AGREED – That the Chairperson writes on the Committee’s behalf to the Cabinet Member to convey their comments and observations. [View Letter](#)

42 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to be held on Thursday 3 December 2015 at 4.30pm in CR4, County Hall, Cardiff.

The meeting terminated at 6.20 pm

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