

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: NRS/RM/PBr/11.11.16

Dyddiad / Date: 24 November 2016



Councillor Peter Bradbury
Cabinet Member: Community Development, Co-operatives & Social Enterprise
City of Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Bradbury

ECONOMY AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11 NOVEMBER 2016

Thank you for attending the November meeting of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee, where we considered items on the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report and the Summer Reading Challenge 2016. I appreciate that a Friday evening isn't the ideal timing for a rearranged Committee meeting and welcome the flexibility shown by both yourself and officers in accommodating this. I will be grateful if you could also pass on the thanks of the Committee to Isabelle Bignall and Nicola Richards for their presentation and for addressing the questions that arose during the meeting. The Committee had a few comments and observations following the meeting, which are set out below.

Welsh Public Library Standards

Members of the Committee were pleased to be informed that Cardiff continues to perform well against the Welsh Public Library Standards 5th Framework. In considering this item last year we wrote to comment that we felt some of the measures used within the Framework could be considered less than appropriate. This clearly is presenting itself again this year, with Cardiff Council being penalised for overspending against the target for children's literature (WPLSQI 9). We accept the explanation given in the presentation, and feel it is acceptable to be spending 24% of the material budget on children's literature given that 32% of issues are on children's stock. Similarly with regard purchases of Welsh Language materials, we were informed at the meeting that Cardiff Council purchases all stock that becomes available, and are still judged to have missed the target within the WPLS Framework. We feel such Indicators should be amended so that authorities are not marked down for exceeding required expenditure and give strong support to you making such representations to the appropriate Minister and Welsh Government officials.

Discussion took place around WPLSQI 12 – Supply of Requests, where we were informed that performance is low due to a glitch in the electronic systems, meaning books were being delivered to the wrong branch libraries. Members of the Committee were surprised that this glitch was not picked up quickly and was able to distort

figures to such an extent that saw Cardiff ranked as one of the lowest performing authorities against this indicator. We were assured at the meeting that there will be significant improvements for next year and this is something we will look to evaluate in 12 months time.

Members were informed during the meeting that stocks at Central and branch libraries are analysed based on information collected by the Electronic Data Interchange systems in place, allowing libraries to keep up with customer demand and provide users with the materials they want. We agree with this approach to a point, but would urge caution that we don't solely rely on market data and become demand led in terms of the books Cardiff libraries provide. It is important that our libraries provide a variety of books, rather than stripping them of the classics and other materials that aren't regularly read, and that this range enables people to try something different and serves to spark imagination.

Summer Reading Challenge 2016

With regard to results from the Summer Reading Challenge 2016, Members of the Committee wish to congratulate you and the Libraries Service for another successful year, where participation and completion rates have increased. We wish to encourage you for next year and hope that Cardiff will reach the 70% completion rate that has been targeted for a number of years. We also wish to congratulate you and officers on securing sponsorship from Joe's Ice Cream, we recognise that this creates a good incentive for children undertaking the Challenge and are pleased to hear that this sponsorship will continue for 2017.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments, observations and recommendations, and look forward to receiving your feedback.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rod McKerlich', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Councillor Rod McKerlich
Chairperson, Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee

cc Sarah McGill – Director, Communities, Housing and Customer Services
Isabelle Bignall – Assistant Director
Cabinet Support Office
Members of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee