



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee

22nd January 2025

Report of the Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage & Culture

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All

Report Title

Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report 2023-2024

Purpose of the Report:

To provide an update to Members on the outcome of the annual return to Welsh Government, Culture Division in respect of the authorities' library services performance against the current Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Framework 6 and to note feedback, comments and recommendations in the recently issued (November 2024) Welsh Government Libraries Report 2023-2024.

Executive Summary:

The current Welsh Public Library Standards (Framework 6) consists of 12 Core Entitlements and 16 Quality Indicators, 10 of which have set targets. Due to the impact of COVID which resulted in the disruption and closure of many libraries during the year 2020–21, the Annual Return required by Welsh Government to evaluate the library services performance against the WPLS was amended as it was impractical to report against the full framework for that year.

We are currently working to the extension of Framework 6 and therefore, for 2023-2024, the Annual return included a summary of provision against the 13 Core Entitlements, recorded the achievements against 12 Quality indicators, (7 of

which have targets) a narrative report on the strategic direction of the service and an impact statement. The Welsh Government report is overwhelmingly positive for Neath Port Talbot with all the core entitlements fully met, highlighting the positive impact libraries have on our communities.

Of the 7 quality indicators that have targets, 4 are met in full, one part met and two not met.

The two not met are: -

- Up to date reading material, spend per capita. This has never been met by Neath Port Talbot Council due to the book fund not being sufficient for this area. We do however have a good selection of new materials and continue to enhance and replenish our stock regularly. It is also worth noting that the cost of books is increasing.
- Opening Hours per capita. With the transfer of Local Authority led libraries into the community in 2013/14, we have not been able to meet this target and continues to be unachievable.

Part met:-

- Staffing levels and qualifications. Again, this is an unachievable standard where we would need to employ staff above and beyond the given budget. All libraries are staffed well and proportionate to the service.

Background:

1. The Annual Assessment Report from Welsh Government, was published in November following the submission of the Annual Return in July, provides a detailed response on the Authorities performance against the current standards framework.
2. As was the case for the 2022-2023 Report, for 2023-2024, a narrative statement was provided which shows the impact the service has on an individual. This is provided in the form of an impact study and focuses on supporting an individual integrate back into society (Appendix 4).
3. Throughout 2023-2024 the Library Service has seen an increase in usage with a wide range of activities and events showing high numbers of attendance.

4. Our Home Delivery Service and Mobile Library continued to thrive throughout 2023-2024 to deliver reading materials to our most vulnerable residents and providing social interaction and support to those who are isolated.
5. Health and wellbeing continues to be an area the Library service invests in, working closely with community partners to offer support and advice, along with Reading Well materials.
6. The Library Service is above the median of Welsh Library Authorities in relation to making a difference to our residents and customer satisfaction.
7. Formal Training and informal support for our residents continue to be above the national median and has increased since 2022-2023.
8. Events attendance continues to be in the top quartile of Welsh library Authorities and has increased by 12% compared to 2022-2023
9. Issue and Visitor figures are steadily increasing, and staff are engaging and supporting members of the public with enquiries, including one to one assistance.
10. Emphasis on accessibility and inclusivity have played a vital role in the direction of the service over the past year, one example is the introduction of noise cancelling headphones in each library.

Financial Impact:

There is no financial impact as a result of the 2023-2024 Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Assessment Report (Appendix 2).

Workforce Impacts:

There are no workforce implications as a result of the Welsh Public Library Standards Report.

Legal Impacts:

The Annual Return to Welsh Government ensures the Council complies with its statutory duty to provide a Public Library service as required under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement to carry out an impact assessment at this stage.

Valleys Communities Impact:

There are no specific Valleys Communities Impacts arising from this report. It should be noted that whilst we recognise the invaluable contribution of volunteers at community managed libraries in Neath Port Talbot, a number of which are in valley communities, we are not able to include them in our statutory return.

Risk Management Impacts:

There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

Consultation:

There are no requirements for additional external consultation on this item.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members note the contents of Annual Assessment Report 2023-2024 and Neath Port Talbot Library Service's Annual Return 2023-2024

Reasons for the Proposed Decision:

No decision required

Implementation of Decision:

No decision required

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Assessment Letter

Appendix 2 - Welsh Public Library Standards Report 2023-2024

Appendix 3 – Neath Port Talbot Library Service Annual Return 2023-2024

Appendix 4 – Impact Statement

List of Background Papers:

None

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