

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
EDUCATION, SKILLS AND CULTURE CABINET BOARD

25 January 2018

REPORT OF HEAD OF TRANSFORMATION
ANDREW THOMAS

MATTER FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report 2016-17

Purpose of the Report

To approve the Annual Report to the Welsh Government in respect of the authorities library services performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) framework 5 and to note the feedback, comments and recommendations in the Annual Assessment Report 2016-17.

Executive Summary

This is the third and final year of framework 5 of the Welsh Public Library Standards, which consists of 18 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators, 7 of which have set targets.

In 2017, following publication of the Library Service Strategy 2016-21, Neath Port Talbot now meet all 18 of the core entitlements in full.

In respect of the 7 quality indicators which have set targets, Neath Port Talbot achieves 2 in full, 3 in part and fails to achieve 2, which has remained the same level of performance throughout the current framework, the result of which can be directly attributed to successive budget reductions since 2014, which have adversely impacted on stock purchases, staffing levels and opening hours.

Background

Public libraries are a statutory service, provided under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

In Wales, all local authorities are required to report annually to the Welsh Government via the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD), on their individual performance against the current framework of the Welsh Public Library Standards, which the Minister uses as an interpretation of local authorities complying with their statutory duty in providing a “comprehensive and efficient” library service as required under the 1964 Act.

This is the third and final year of the fifth framework of the Standards which covers the period 2014 – 17. The framework consists of 18 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators, 7 of which have set targets upon which the library services performance is evaluated.

Following the transfer of 9 libraries to community management in April 2014, the Welsh Government commissioned a Report on Community Managed Libraries and the Statutory Provision of Public Library Services in Wales (May 2015), which only recognises those community libraries where paid staff are available for a minimum of 50% of the opening hours. This excludes most of the community libraries in Neath Port Talbot and directly impacts on the total number of aggregated opening hours which can be attributed towards Quality Indicator 16.

Financial Impact

Since 2014, the library service has seen budget reductions of nearly £600,000 or 30% of the total budget. The current Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for the library service is £2,560,000 against the current revenue budget of £1,572,000.

In order to fully comply with the Welsh Public Library Standards, Neath Port Talbot would need to increase expenditure in the following areas:

Book stock – an additional £100,000.

Staffing – An additional 13 full time members of staff would be required at an estimated cost of £210,000.

Public Access Computers – An additional 38 public access computers would be required at a cost of £19,000.

Equality Impact Assessment

There are no equality impacts associated with this report.

Workforce Impacts

There are no workforce implications

Legal Impacts

The Annual Report ensures that the Council complies with its statutory duty to provide a public library service required under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Risk Management

Due to reductions in the library service budget, performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards has deteriorated since 2013 and those standards that the authority fail to achieve are mostly resource based, namely book stock and staffing levels.

The Annual Assessment Report 2016-17 (appendix 2) acknowledges the current difficult budget situation, while noting that the service is finally stabilising after a number of difficult years.

The next Standards framework 6, covers the years 2017 – 2020 and consists of 12 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators.

Consultation

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve the Annual Report to Welsh Government and note the contents of the Annual Assessment Report 2016-17.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

To enable the Council to comply with its statutory duty of providing a library service in Neath Port Talbot.

Implementation of Decision

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Neath Port Talbot – Annual Return 31st March 2017.

Appendix 2: Annual Assessment Report 2016 – 17.

List of Background Papers

None

Officer Contact

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