

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION SKILLS AND WELLBEING CABINET BOARD

1st February 2024

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE TOURISM HERITAGE AND CULTURE

MATTER FOR INFORMATION

WARDS AFFECTED: All

WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Purpose of Report

To provide an update to Members for the Library service - 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 2023) Welsh Libraries Report 2022-2023.

Executive Summary

The current Welsh Public Library Standards (Framework 6) usually 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 2022-2023, the Annual return included a summary of provision against the 12 Core Entitlements, recorded the achievements against 16 Quality indicators, (10 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 10 quality indicators that have targets, 8 are met in full, one part met and one not met.

- Up to date reading material, spend per capita. This has never been met by Neath Port Talbot Council due to our 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.
- Staffing levels and qualifications. Again this is an unachievable standard where we would need to employ staff above and beyond our budget. All libraries are staffed well and proportionate to the service.

Background

1. The Annual Assessment Report from Welsh Government, which was published in November following the submission of the Annual Return in the previous July, provides a detailed response on the Authorities performance against the current standards framework.
2. As was the case for the 2021-2022 Report, for 2022-2023, a narrative statement was provided which shows the impact the service has on an individual group. This is provided in the form of an impact study.
3. Throughout 2022-2023 the Library Service has seen an increase in usage post pandemic 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 2022-2023 to deliver reading materials to our most vulnerable residents and providing social interaction and support to those who are isolated.
5. The Library Service has a large number of Adult and Children's reading groups which has been acknowledged in this report, providing increased literacy and well-being.
6. While our Libraries are still recovering from the pandemic, we have increased our Digital offer, providing access to electronic reading materials 24/7.
7. We have now resumed all our regular activities and collaboration with our local community groups.
8. Overall, Issue and Visitor figures are steadily increasing and staff are engaging and supporting members of the public with enquiries, including one to one assistance.
9. Finally, we opened a new Neath Library providing a modern and engaging facility for our users, along with a Makerspace area in Port Talbot Library providing a digital suite and creative space for craft groups.

Financial Impact Assessment

10. There is no financial impact as a result of the 2022-2023 Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Assessment Report (Appendix 1).

Valleys Communities Impact

11. 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 include them in our statutory return.

Integrated Impact Assessment

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

Workforce Impact

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

Legal Impact

14. 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.

Risk Management

15. There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

Consultation

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

Recommendation

17. It is recommended that Members note the contents of Annual Assessment Report 2022-2023 and Neath Port Talbot Library Service's Annual Return 2022-2023

Reasons for Proposed Decision

18. No decision required.

Implementation of Decision

19. No decision required.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Assessment Letter

Appendix 2 - Welsh public Library Standards Report 2022-2023

Appendix 3 – Neath Port Talbot Library Service Annual Return 2022-2023

Appendix 4 – Impact Statement

List of Background Papers

None

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