



**CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL**  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**  
**COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE SUMMONS**

C Hanagan  
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council  
2 Llys Cadwyn  
Taff Street  
Pontypridd  
CF37 4TH

Meeting Contact: Jess Daniel - Democratic Services Officer (07385401877)

**YOU ARE SUMMONED** to a hybrid meeting of **COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held on **MONDAY, 11TH MARCH, 2024** at **5.00 PM**.

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Thursday, 7 March 2024 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

**AGENDA**

**Page  
No's**

**1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and
2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

**2. MINUTES 15.01.24**

To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the virtual meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

**5 - 14**

**3. CONSULTATION LINKS**

Information is provided in respect of relevant [consultations](#) for consideration by the Committee.

**4. INFORMATION REPORTS**

The following reports are provided for the information of Members, to enable members, where appropriate, to identify matters for further scrutiny or consideration:

[SUSTAINABLE FOOD PLACES: UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE RCT FOOD PARTNERSHIP IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF](#)

[PATHWAYS TO CARE DELAYS – DATA UPDATE](#)

(For Members to acknowledge the information contained within these reports but any queries relating to the item can be directed to [Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk))

**5. BI-ANNUAL CABINET MEMBER ENGAGEMENT**

To scrutinise any matters with the portfolio holder responsible for Health and Social Care and to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

**15 - 20**

**6. WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS**

To receive the Welsh Government's Assessment feedback on the Welsh Public Library Standards within RCT.

**21 - 66**

**7. CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE**

To reflect on the meeting and actions to be taken forward.

**8. URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

## **Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication**

### **Circulation:-**

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee  
(County Borough Councillor J Bonetto and County Borough Councillor R Davis  
respectively)

### **County Borough Councillors:**

Councillor S Bradwick, Councillor A J Ellis, Councillor D Evans, Councillor A Fox,  
Councillor H Gronow, Councillor N H Morgan, Councillor G Jones,  
Councillor D Owen-Jones, Councillor D Parkin, Councillor A Roberts,  
Councillor G Stacey and Councillor T Williams

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## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Virtual meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 15 January 2024 at 5.00 pm

This meeting was recorded, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

### **County Borough Councillors – The following Community Services Scrutiny Committee Councillors were present:-**

Councillor J Bonetto (Chair)

Councillor S Bradwick	Councillor R Davis
Councillor D Evans	Councillor A Fox
Councillor N H Morgan	Councillor D Owen-Jones
Councillor D Parkin	Councillor A Roberts
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor T Williams

### **Officers in attendance:-**

Ms L Davies, Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services  
Mr N Elliott, Director of Social Services  
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication  
Ms R Hope, Head of Service for Public Protection and Regulatory Services  
Ms S Nowell, Director of Adult Services  
Mr N Pilliner, Environmental Protection and Housing Standards Manager  
Ms C Miles, Childcare Solicitor

### **County Borough Councillors in attendance:-**

Councillor B Harris

#### **25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors G Jones and A Ellis.

#### **26 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interest made.

#### **27 MINUTES 21.11.23**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

#### **28 CONSULTATION LINKS**

Members acknowledged the information provided through the consultation links

in respect of open consultations, Welsh Government consultations and those matters being consulted upon by the local authority.

## **29 BI-ANNUAL CABINET MEMBER ENGAGEMENT**

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities to the Committee and thanked her for attending. The Service Director, Democratic Services & Communications presented his report to Members and advised Members that they have an opportunity to scrutinise any arising matters with the portfolio holder responsible for Public Health and Communities and to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

Discussions ensued regarding the progress of the establishment of the Community Safety Partnership board and a Member queried regarding engagement and ensuring in terms of community engagement that this would carry through in to the new structure. The Cabinet Member shared that a multi-agency focus group is currently in place and working towards a regional Cwm Taf Morgannwg Community Safety Partnership Board implementation date of the 1st April 2024. A progress report is due to be presented to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 23rd February and to the RCT Community Services (Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee on the 28th February.

A Member queried whether consideration been made regarding the potential for one Local Authority to dominate the partnership with the Cabinet Member acknowledging that this is a concern that has been raised, and recognised the risks associated with this issue. Members were informed that to keep local autonomy and accountability within each individual Local Authority, the partnership will recognise that any review of the structures must deliver not only a suitable integrated regional structure, but one which ensures that arrangements for local accountability are comprehensive and precise.

Therefore, the Partnership will ensure that each Local Authority will be monitored and held accountable for their contributions. When pressed further on the risk of one local authority dominating the partnership the Cabinet Member added the development of a regional strategic partnership should not impact adversely on those Councils and respective agencies that are successfully operating and delivering local safety initiatives to the community it serves. The new Terms of Reference of the Community Safety Partnership will include the importance of upholding local community safety arrangements, and also upholding the current local scrutiny arrangements that are in place for Community Safety.

Discussions continued and focussed on the Local Toilet Strategy with a Member asking whether the Council is doing enough to communicate with residents over what facilities are available and where. The Member also referenced vandalism in public toilets and asked what is being done to tackle this. The Cabinet Member recognised the issue of vandalism and the impact this has on the Council and funding challenges to repair damage. With regards to communications, the Cabinet Member shared that a plan has been developed with other service areas and an RCTCBC web page is being developed to provide public toilet locations throughout the borough. The potential of an app will also be explored. Public toilets will also be identifiable through use of a logo sticker. The Cabinet Member also highlighted the locations of available changing spaces within the County Borough.

A Member asked if there was information available on how different groups are

affected by the strategy and information available in progress in engaging with local businesses in town centres to encourage them to allow the public to use their facilities. And the impact of footfall in Town Centres. The Cabinet Member recognised there is a need for more diverse facilities and whilst figures were not available in the meeting, the Cabinet Member shared this would be something that they would feed back to the Member directly. The Cabinet Member emphasised the view that challenges faced by individuals should not be a barrier to accessing toilets and the Cabinet Member confirmed this is something that will be looked into. In relation to the engagement with local businesses, Members were advised that Officers in the Community Development Team and the Prosperity and Development Team will be engaging with businesses shortly, with initial focus on Pontypridd town centre businesses in readiness for the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol.

A Member asked what is being done to provide facilities out of town centres and queries about funding available from Welsh Government. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the decrease in the number of facilities available across the borough whilst also highlighting to Members that the provision of local toilets for public use is not a statutory requirement of local authorities in Wales. The Cabinet Member also commented regarding the challenge of funding new facilities in the current financial climate and acknowledged the suggestion of communicating with Welsh Government around funding opportunities available for this issue.

Members took the opportunity to also discuss the Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) Licensing Review and a Member asked the Cabinet Member to what extent do they consider Landlord HMO non-compliance to be an issue, especially within the Treforest ward and whether the Council is doing enough to ensure enforcement actions are in place for those who are wilfully non-compliant. The Cabinet Member responded that Landlord non-compliance poses a significant issue for the Council and our residents for many reasons. The Additional Licensing Scheme for 2024 is vital for ensuring that the Council can mitigate these negative impacts and hold those who are wilfully non-compliant accountable using enforcement action.

A Member sought clarification on whether, with evidence of student numbers declining in Treforest over recent years, the Council anticipates a potential decline in the number of HMOs going forward. The Cabinet Member shared that the private rented market is difficult to predict. Considering the current state of the financial climate with the cost-of-living crisis, the impact of welfare reform, changes to Housing Benefit, and the high demand for smaller accommodation, HMOs are becoming an increasingly viable options for many residents. Despite the decline in student numbers, HMOs continue to be seen as a housing choice by young professionals, who are new to the employment market.

Another Member referenced the concerns that had previously been raised about unsafe living standards in HMO's and sought clarification that the inspection process through the strategy would provide Members with confidence that safety standards are being met. The Cabinet Member shared confidence with the Councils Officers addressing safety issues as a matter of high importance when these arise.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Member for attending and thanked Members for their questions. It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Scrutinise the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities in respect of matters considered and agreed by Cabinet, and any key decisions taken, during the period 11 May 2023 – 15th January 2024
2. Identify any areas arising from those matters determined within this period which Committee wish to further scrutinise, as part of revisions to the committees published work programme, in relation to Public Health and Communities.

## **30 CONTAMINATED LAND STRATEGY**

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications outlined the purpose of the report for Members to pre-scrutinise the detail provided in the report and to provide the comments and observations of the Committee to Chief Officer and relevant Cabinet Member prior to their consideration of the proposed Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy for RCT, through the delegated decision process.

The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager outlined the background to the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy (CLIS) and Members were informed that following a public consultation Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council published its initial CLIS in January 2004. Members were also informed that the Council's CLIS was designed to achieve the following set of priorities with respect to potential contaminated land:

- a. To protect human health and well being
- b. To encourage the redevelopment of damaged land/ reuse of Brownfield land
- c. To encourage voluntary remediation
- d. To communicate and work effectively with other organisations to protect other receptors
- e. To engage with local communities to establish their priorities
- f. To ensure compliance with and enforcement of the legislation and statutory guidance.

The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager highlighted to Members that historically a number of key strategic sites have been investigated and remediated by the Council in partnership with the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) and other stakeholders, giving the examples of Coed Ely Colliery and Coking Works, and the Phurnacite works in Abercwmboi. The remediation of many other sites has been secured through the planning process. A geographical information system (GIS) developed by the Public Health and Protection Department has proved invaluable at the planning consultation stage in identifying such areas of land. Members were informed that contaminated land issues are often complex and dealing with potential contaminated sites is difficult especially as information is often limited or unavailable.

Members were also informed that since 2010, the Welsh Assembly Government has not provided a capital funding programme for the investigation and/or remediation of contaminated land. In addition to this, the Council has no specific capital budget for the investigation and/or remediation of contaminated land. As a result, the Council has focused its resources on ensuring effective site investigation and remediation via the Development Control process, by conditioning planning consents where necessary. Investigations are carried out prior to development and seek to characterise the exact nature of any potential pollutant linkages and ensure they are appropriately remediated.

The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager continued to present key aspects of the CLIS and of the most recent review. Members were advised that the CLIS review process has been used to assess the effectiveness of the original CLIS in meeting the requirements of Part 2A legislation and statutory guidance. The first full review of the CLIS was completed in December 2008. In 2016, the strategy was then revised to take account of the change in statutory guidance in 2012. It was highlighted to Members that timescales in the original Contaminated Land Strategy were deemed to be arbitrary, which needed to be redefined in light of experience, demands on resources and changes in funding provision. As a result, each review of the CLIS has redefined inspection targets in order to provide a realistic and achievable programme. Members were directed to Appendix 1 which contained a copy of the most recently reviewed CLIS from December 2023.

The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager pointed out that the withdrawal of capital grant funding significantly impacted Welsh Local Authorities in their ability to undertake the formal investigation of potential contaminated land. As a result, the Council focused its resources on providing input into the Development Control process, whereby conditions are added to planning consents requiring investigations/remediation to be undertaken where necessary. This involves a significant amount of Officer time but it does provide an effective alternative mechanism for dealing with contamination by ensuring that the land is suitable for use and securing remediation on a voluntary basis. There are no current funding opportunities available and the Council will continue to utilise its resources via the Development Control process.

Members were referred to Appendix 2 which outlined examples to demonstrate the use of contaminated land conditions to ensure the safe redevelopment of land with a potential source of contamination in RCT.

A Member referred to Mountain Waters / Mine Waters coming down Mountain Sides and threatening houses and requested clarification that responsibility lies with Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager confirmed NRW are the national regulator for controlled waters, meaning the water running off mountain sides would be within their remit. Members were advised information is available regarding contacting NRW with concerns.

A Member commented that the strategy is comprehensive, clearly written and technical.

Another Member referenced the increased instances of flooding in recent years and questioned whether there are sufficient connections between this and the Council's flood risk management strategy and went on to enquire whether, in flooding events there are protocols in place for risk assessing any contamination that could arise. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager acknowledged the impact of climate change and flood risk on developments and shared that these matters would have to form part of the risk assessments on developments which would be reviewed by NRW as well as the Council.

A Member referred to the information in the report regarding NRW's responsibility for special sites where most contamination is present and asked whether the Council is happy with scrutiny arrangements in terms of the work of NRW and whether there is there adequate monitoring in place given Council's

responsibility to residents in the local areas. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager explained that when an area is declared a special site, NRW become regulator for the site with the Council working alongside. NRW have responsibility for future remediation and it remains a special site until remediation is resolved.

A Member highlighted the information regarding the Public register noting this was only available on hard copy. The Member asked whether there were plans to make this available online in interests of transparency. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager shared that this would need to be enquired about further but recognition would need to be given to the amount of information available and the suitability of this being published online.

Another Member asked whether it was felt there should there be an additional risk assessment carried out when instances of significant flooding occur to ensure confidence that no contamination has occurred. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager explained this would form part of the flood risk management teams work and provided an overview of the actions taken since the impact of Storm Dennis and the involvement of other Council Departments and NRW.

Members acknowledged this point and felt it would be beneficial to request further information on this matter from the flood risk management team.

A Member acknowledged the information in the report which states that Welsh Government (WG) no longer provides funding for investigating contaminated land and how the Council relies on the Development Control and Planning process. The Member also highlighted that the report also states that in part 2 of Environmental Act that the Council must inspect its area in terms of contaminated land and asked whether the lack of resources impacts the Council's ability to carry out inspections and if the RCT approach is consistent with other Local Authorities in Wales. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager outlined for Members the inspection process, assuring Members that land is inspected but this is done through the development control process. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager also added that the Council identified the various range of sites when initial CLIS was developed and acknowledged that the Council is unable to proactively go out and complete inspections but that by working alongside the Councils Planning department this ensures risks are covered. Regarding other Local Authorities (LA's), the Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager informed Members that all LA's are in the same position regarding funding and the use of development control is consistent.

A Member asked how this strategy feeds in to the Council's wider plans such as the Corporate Plan and the Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager shared that in terms of sustainability it is important to take into account of the possible impact on future generations and making sure land is safe. Clarification was provided that the main focus of the CLIS is to deal with risks of previous land use. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager also added there are links to Carbon reduction in terms of the development process going forward and ensuring there are no causes of contamination. Members were informed that there are more controls in place in terms of environmental permits and Health & Safety legislation to control pollution happening.

A Member queried how the Council can be certain that this approach does not pose a risk to our communities given the lack of resources available. The Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager assured Members that if there are complaints received from the community the Council acts upon these and if risks are identified in the community these are acted upon.

Following consideration Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Authorise the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to provide the comments and observations of the Committee to Chief Officer and relevant Cabinet Member.

-Request further information from the Councils Flood Risk Management Team in respect of the queries identified in relation to significant flooding events.

### **31 PATHWAYS TO CARE DELAYS**

The Director of Adult Services presented the report to provide Members with key Pathways of Care Delays information for Rhondda Cynon Taf residents between April and November 2023, an update on current winter pressures impact on hospital discharges and information relating to the use of electronic whiteboards and sharing of patient's information to support hospital discharge.

The Director also shared with Members that colleagues from Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board were present in the meeting.

The Director outlined the background to hospital discharge delays as contained within the report explaining to Members that previous assumptions about delayed discharges often focused on limited capacity in social care as the root cause of delays, but there are a mix of other factors that can cause delays in discharging patients from hospital, including challenges accessing other NHS services in the community.

It was highlighted to Members that there has been three different data collections relating to hospital transfer delays which were:

- Delayed Transfers of Care (DToC) which were available from 2004 until February 2020.
- Management information reports on hospital discharge delays from July 2020 to March 2023 (generated and validated only by the Health Boards).
- Pathways of Care Delays introduced from April 2023.

Members were informed that there is a requirement for each Health Board to measure Pathways of Care Delays via a monthly snapshot census on the third Wednesday of the month and, after validation and agreement with social services and wider local government partners, to report this information to the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Director explained that there are a wide variety of reasons for a Pathways of Care Delay and Members were directed to the full list at Appendix 1.

Members were taken through the data analysis information as contained within the report with the Director highlighting an overall downward trend in the number of reported delays for Rhondda Cynon Taf over the year to date and despite having the largest population performance overall is good when compared to

wider Cwm Taf Morgannwg activity.

The Director provided an overview of the information provided within tables 2a-d in the report and explained that the top 4 delay reasons in Rhondda Cynon Taf reflect similar themes across Wales and other Local Authorities.

The Director continued the presentation by explaining from the report that an Integrated Discharge Board has been established to take overall accountability for discharge performance across the Health board footprint, including ensuring Pathways of Care Delays are reported effectively, and most importantly implementing an improvement plan to tackle the areas that pose the greatest risk to delay. Members were provided with an overview of the areas of greatest risk for Cwm Taf Morgannwg and action plans as required.

The Director explained to Members the current position with regards to the Pathways of Care Delays data and how Social Services staff have worked closely with the Health Board to expedite discharges especially from Royal Glamorgan and Prince Charles Acute Hospitals as part of an established Gold Command Structure.

The Director also provided additional information as requested at a previous meeting by Members, regarding the use of electronic whiteboards on Hospital wards and sharing of patient's information to support hospital discharge. Members were provided with an overview of the purpose of the whiteboards in hospitals and the benefits that have been felt to have been received by their introduction from the Health Board.

Members were also provided with re-assurance regarding the transfer of data through the use of the Whiteboards with the Director outlining from the report the methods and procedures in place to ensure effective information management.

A Member queried the data relating to disagreements and asked how these are managed. The Director acknowledged the difficulty in managing these cases but outlined the process of working together with hospital ward staff and managers in the Health Board to have discussions with the families to understand the reasons for the disputes and to try to navigate a solution with the best outcome for the patient. The Officer from Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board also confirmed to Members the process of having conversations with families and gave an overview of work being done within the Health Board relating to an integrated discharge policy and procedure. Members were also provided with details of the Optimise Programme which is aimed at supporting hospital staff with practical help around effective discharge. The Officer also highlighted how the Health Board are in line with the new hospital discharge policy recently published by Welsh Government including with guidance given around reluctant discharge.

Another Member questioned whether data is available around how long people have been waiting for discharge. The Director confirmed that the Pathways to Care delays is only snapshot of data on a single day and does not provide a story behind the figure. The Officer from Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board also reiterated that the information is only a point in time, and it is not known how long a patient has been subject to that delay as reasons can change day to day. The Officer shared with Members that the Health Board are developing a flow and discharge dashboard which will give an overall view of patient's length of stay and the value of the hospital stay.

Another Member raised a question regarding the assessment process before discharge and requested further information around care home placements availability within the County Borough. The Director outlined for Members the process of assessment prior to discharge and recognised there are cases where delays occur but generally Social Services ensure needs are met in interim. The Director also acknowledged that the availability of care homes fluctuates which can result in there being periods where some homes are full. Members were informed that there are times where people are placed out of county but the Director emphasised that the Council would make these as interim placements, and look to facilitate a move at a later date where these circumstances are preferred by families.

The Member also queried about care home fees and the difference between the levels of fees set by the Council and those in Private Care homes. The Director confirmed that care home fees for individuals are set in the policy of the Council each year and follow Welsh Government policy for residential charges. The Director also highlighted that Private care homes can apply their own fees for people that self-fund their care and referenced the influence of market forces in how those levels being set. It is acknowledged that costs for care homes have increased but Director confirmed to Members that the Council is working with providers locally to review their costs of care to consider Council fee setting accordingly.

Following consideration Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Scrutinise the content of the report
- Request further updates on the data following winter pressures to monitor trends.

## **32 CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE**

The Chair thanked Officers for their attendance at the meeting and their comprehensive report presentations. The Chair also thanked Members for their contribution and questions during the meeting.

## **33 URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**This meeting closed at 6.50 pm**

**Councillor J Bonetto  
Chair.**

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

### COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11<sup>th</sup> March 2024

#### BI-ANNUAL CABINET MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

#### REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. To scrutinise any arising matters with the portfolio holder responsible for Health and Social Care and to ensure that the appropriate mechanisms are in place to effectively scrutinise the Executive.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Scrutinise the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care in respect of matters considered and agreed by Cabinet, and any key decisions taken, during the period 11 May 2023 – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024; and,
- 2.2 Identify any areas arising from those matters determined within this period which Committee wish to further scrutinise, as part of revisions to the committees published work programme, in relation to Health and Social Care.

#### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide the Community Services Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the Cabinet in respect of the decisions taken in the defined decision-making period.
- 3.2 The recommendations seek to provide a structure to these sessions, to enable discussion and challenge to be focused upon a defined period and those individual decisions taken.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 As part of this Council's ongoing commitment to improve the function of Scrutiny as a critical friend of the Council, this item is being brought before the Community Services Scrutiny Committee as part of Cabinet and Scrutiny engagement.
- 4.2 Such an approach will provide Scrutiny Members with the opportunity to further challenge the Executive, as the Cabinet Member can provide details relating to the investments being taken forward within the portfolio and the challenges faced by the Council.

#### **5. SCRUTINY OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

- 5.1 The role that the Community Services Scrutiny Committee can play in holding the Council's decision-makers to account makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy. Scrutinising the Executive serves an important purpose in ensuring that decision makers of the Council are held accountable for their actions and decisions.
- 5.2 By Scrutinising the Cabinet Member Health and Social Care, the public can gain a better understanding of their decision-making process and hold them accountable, which will promote openness and transparency within the Council. It will also ensure that those in Leadership positions are acting in the best interests of their constituents.
- 5.3 Scrutiny can also identify areas for improvement and drive positive changes, strengthening our governance arrangements. Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the authority itself. Conversely, poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership and service failure.
- 5.4 Under the [Terms of Reference](#) of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee, Members have the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge areas that fall under the remit of the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care. The main responsibility areas of the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care cover the following areas:
- Adult Social Care (including Residential, in-house & external)
  - Care management Mental Health
  - Care management Learning Disabilities
  - Day Care Services
  - Adult & Children's Safeguarding
  - Children's Services
  - Foster Care & Adoption
  - Family Support services
  - Corporate Parenting Lead
  - Resilient Families

5.5 Scrutiny in various forms is essential to ensuring accountability, transparency and fairness and ensures that political decisions are taken in the best interests of our residents.

5.6 **Decisions taken forward by the Portfolio holder during the period 11 May 2023 – 11 March 2024**

The decisions can be found by clicking on the following links below:-

Learning Disability Day Services Offer - November 2023

[Decision - Learning Disability Day Services Offer - Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Future Commissioning of the Council's Supported Living Service for People with a Learning Disability – October 2023

[Decision - Learning Disability Day Services Offer - Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Discussed at Community Services Scrutiny Committee meeting – Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Social Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report – October 2023

[Decision - Social Services Representations, Compliments and Complaints Procedures Annual Report 2022/23 - Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Discussed at Community Services Scrutiny Committee meeting – Monday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Domiciliary Care Services – October 2023

[Decision - Future Commissioning of Domiciliary Home Care - Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Director Social Services Annual Report – November 2023

[Decision - Director of Social Services Annual Report 2022 / 2023 - Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Discussed at Community Services Scrutiny Committee meeting – Monday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Day Services for Older People – December 2023

[Decision – Day Services for Older People – Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Discussed at Community Services Scrutiny Committee meeting – Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2022-23 – October 2023

[Decision - Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2022-2023](#)

### Exempt Decisions

'Operating without Registration (OWR) settings

[Decision - Update in relation to the Children Looked After: Residential Care Strategy 2022-2027](#)

This item was exempt due to it containing exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 14 and 18 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended). If Members have any queries in respect of this item, they should contact the Cabinet Member outside of the meeting.

- 5.7 Questions should be focussed in respect of the above decisions taken by the Cabinet Member, to enable effective scrutiny of those decisions by committee members.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 6.1 None arising as a direct result of this report.

## **7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 7.1 There are no consultation requirements emanating from the recommendations set out in this report.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 The report has been prepared in accordance with paragraph Part 4 of the Constitution (Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules).

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 To provide the Community Services Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge and make recommendations for policy improvement under the remit of the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**11<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND  
COMMUNICATIONS**

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## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024

#### WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS: RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S ASSESSMENT REPORT 2022-2023

#### REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH COUNCILLOR BOB HARRIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

**Author(s)**: Nick Kelland – Library and Information Advice Service Manager

#### 1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide information to the Community Services Scrutiny Committee on the feedback received from Welsh Government in respect of the Library Service's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) within the Sixth Quality Framework of the WPLS: '[Connected and Ambitious Libraries](#)' (Appendix 1) for the period 2022-2023.

#### 2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider the content of the Annual Assessment Report 2022-2023 (Appendix 2) received from Welsh Government.
- 2.2 Scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained within the report.

#### 3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Welsh Government has developed a range of indicators (the [Welsh Public Library Standards](#)) against which the performance of library authorities in Wales can be measured.

- 3.2 Progress against the standards is reviewed by Welsh Government on an annual basis, to ensure that local authorities are endeavouring to carry out their statutory responsibilities in the delivery of a core library service.
- 3.3 This Assessment Report on the Library Service's performance falls under the Sixth Quality Framework of the WPLS: '[Connected and Ambitious Libraries](#)', which was due to expire in 2020 and a new framework created; however, due to the impact of the pandemic, the development of the seventh framework has been delayed and the sixth framework has been extended, with some minor revisions.
- 3.4 The aims of the Sixth Quality Framework are to:
- Enable the Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport to fulfil the statutory requirements of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 in respect of superintending the duty of local authorities to deliver a '*comprehensive and efficient*' library service;
  - Provide a robust assessment of the performance of library services;
  - Have clear links to the Welsh Government's agenda to ensure credibility across local government in Wales;
  - Be relevant and useful to all local authority library services in Wales;
  - Be transparent, easily understood and accepted by stakeholders;
  - Incorporate outcome measures to show the benefits of using libraries;
  - Act as a driver for improvements to library services and local communities; and
  - Minimise the burden of data collection on library authorities.
- 3.5 The Sixth Quality Framework of the WPLS includes 12 core entitlements and 16 Quality Indicators designed to monitor how well library services provide for the people of Wales.
- 3.6 The Quality Indicators fall into three broad types:
- Input indicators are concerned primarily with what the library service will provide for the citizens of Wales in key areas in order that core entitlements can be delivered;
  - Output indicators are concerned with levels of use; when considered alongside input indicators they can give an indication of the efficiency of delivery of the service;
  - Outcome and impact indicators measure the direct or indirect effects of the library service on its users and the wider community.
- 3.7 In addition to the core entitlements and quality indicators, authorities are required to submit an Impact Statement (Appendix 3) which provides evidence that the library service has made a positive difference to an individual or group of individuals.

#### **4. RESULTS OF THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2022-2023**

- 4.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Library Service was assessed as follows:
- All 12 core entitlements were met in full;

- Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 5 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 4;
- ICT provision, stock acquisition and staffing were areas identified as requiring attention.

4.2 The Assessment Report recognises that '*Rhondda Cynon Taf is facing a challenging financial situation*' but expresses that '*the planned cuts to staffing and the book budget are a serious concern given that the service is already falling short of targets in these areas*'.

4.3 It is difficult to assess the 2022-2023 performance in comparison to 2021-2022 as the Welsh Government issued an abridged version that year due to the impact of the Covid pandemic, with many of the quality indicators reported upon in 2022 – 2023 not present in the 2021-2022 report; however, the quality indicators which have targets were reported upon in both years and our performance against these has remained static, with the service having achieved 5 in full and 1 in part.

4.4 Undoubtedly, major changes to the service during the Covid pandemic continued to have an adverse impact on performance against some indicators; however, data on the number of visitors to libraries, and attendees at training sessions and organised events/activities, showed significant improvement on those reported in 2021-2022, yet these still have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

4.5 There is improvement to be made with regard indicators such as staff training, volunteers in libraries and the provision of events or activities for users with special requirements.

4.6 We will continually be unable to meet the quality indicator relating to expenditure, such as purchasing materials and the number of staff employed, without a significant increase in financial resources; however, this measurement does not correlate with the quality of service delivery, whereby our most recent Customer Survey indicated that 94% of our users rated the choice of books as very good or good, and in this area, we ranked 4<sup>th</sup> out of the 16 authorities that returned the data.

4.7 Furthermore, at a time when local authorities are required to make best use of limited resources, some of the quality indicators do not appear to ensure a best value approach with service decisions impacting negatively on performance against some indicators.

4.8 One such example is that of 2022-23 Computer usage across RCT libraries which was 11% of available capacity based on 6.82 computers per 10,000 population; however, to improve our performance against the WPLSQI 11 (online access) we would need to purchase more computers, and given that there is 89% of available capacity on the current number of computers within libraries, this is not best value for expenditure of a limited budget.

## **5. LOCAL AUTHORITY LIBRARY SERVICES ACROSS WALES: AN UPDATE**

5.1 Local authority Library Services across Wales have developed differently over the past 10 years, as local authorities have adopted various approaches to funding their services following budget reductions.

- 5.2 As a result, many Councils no longer offer a full range of specialist services, such as home delivery and schools library services, which Rhondda Cynon Taf has maintained along with 13 static libraries; and additionally, some authorities have outsourced the management of their library provision to a trust, and others make extensive use of community-run libraries; as such, it is difficult to compare performance across Wales or to have a set of national benchmarks that measures the performance of library services in a meaningful way.
- 5.3 Rhondda Cynon Taf is one of 16 authorities that meet all the 12 core entitlements, and one of only 5 authorities that meet 5 quality indicators in full (the performance of local authority library services across Wales can be seen at Appendix 4).
- 5.4 A meeting was held between representatives of the Welsh Government's Culture Division and the Council's Chief Executive on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023 whereby the authorities financial pressures were outlined and the rationale behind the proposed changes to the library service discussed, noting that they have been designed to be equitable across the authority and have as little impact on customers as possible.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 6.1 There are no implications as a direct result of this report.

## **7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

## **8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 8.1 There are no consultation implications as a direct result of this report; however, it should be noted that developments to date and those in future, rely upon significant involvement from all key partners and agencies.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 10.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires local authorities to ensure the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient service' without providing any criteria for what can be considered as 'comprehensive and efficient'; and in Wales, the Welsh Government's Welsh Public Library Standards has clear quality indicators that library services have to abide by, which are outlined in this report.

## **11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

11.1 The Library Service specifically contributes to all four of the well-being objectives within the Council's proposed new Corporate Plan 'Working With Our Communities':

- **People and Communities:** supporting and empowering residents and communities to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives;
- **Work and Business:** helping to strengthen and grow RCT's economy, with thriving town centres and a well-connected County Borough;
- **Nature and the Environment:** supporting a clean, safe and sustainable RCT;
- **Culture and Heritage:** recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present and future where culture and heritage are vibrant, preserved and recognised as enhancing well-being.

11.2 The Service reflects the five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, considering long-term needs, focusing on collaboration and involvement of communities, contributing specifically to a Wales of cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language goals of the Act.

## 12. **CONCLUSION**

12.1 During a year where the effects of the Covid pandemic were still being felt, the Library Service has met all 12 Core Entitlements, and either fully or partly achieved 6 of the 10 Quality Indicators set by Welsh Government; nevertheless, it is recognised that there are opportunities for further improvement in some areas highlighted in the current report.

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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Connected and Ambitious Libraries:

The sixth quality framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020

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# Foreword

**Public libraries connect people, information and culture.** The Welsh Government and local authorities have an established record of working well together to achieve ambitious goals for our library services. I am delighted to be working collaboratively with local authorities on a new framework of Welsh Public Library Standards, to ensure that we continue to provide the citizens of Wales with high quality public library services.

As library users know, libraries provide everyone with a wealth of information, resources, activities and cultural opportunities. They are places of ambition and learning where people can gain new skills, leading to job success and prosperity; they encourage people to be active and healthy through a range of health information services and partnerships; and they connect and unite people, not only with each other and local communities, but also with culture and the world beyond Wales. They also make a valuable contribution to the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

All parts of the public sector are facing considerable financial pressure, including public library services. The expectations of citizens, for a high quality library service, need to be balanced with what is practical and possible to deliver, alongside the statutory requirement to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” service as specified in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

The Welsh Public Library Standards framework provides a mechanism to enable service providers to plan their provision, and for the public to know what they can expect from their library service. The framework also enables me to assess provision and performance of Welsh public library services as part of my statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

I am pleased that this new framework increases the emphasis on outcome and impact measures to help identify the wider benefits of using the library service. In conjunction with promoting the Standards to make our library services as sustainable and efficient as possible, further consideration will also be given to the regional consortia model which was outlined in the Expert Review of Public Libraries and the Scoping a New Future for Welsh Public Libraries report.

I welcome this new framework of the Standards and the opportunities that it provides to continue the positive partnership between the Welsh Government and local authorities to continue to deliver an outstanding connected and ambitious public library service in Wales.

## **Ken Skates, AM**

Cabinet Secretary for  
Economy and Infrastructure



# 1. Introduction

**“Freedom, Prosperity and the Development of society and individuals are fundamental human values. They will only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in society. Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information.**

**“The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.”<sup>1</sup>**

## 1.1. The benefits of using public libraries

Library service engagement with individuals and with the wider community drives benefits in many of the Welsh Government’s priority areas such as prosperity, resilience, equality, cohesive communities, culture, learning and health and well being. How the library interacts with its stakeholders – chiefly the users (and potential users) of the service – is key to the provision of a quality service. User perceptions of the services available derive from their experiences.

Libraries which engage appropriately with their customers will provide the maximum benefits both for individuals and the community. As well as providing training and learning support for individuals, libraries contribute to society in other ways, such as providing access to computers and e-government for digitally excluded members of the community.

The public library has a key role in social inclusion. It may be the only place in the community where users can spend time in a safe and neutral environment. Supporting job-seekers in their search for work contributes to the local – and

national – economy. By providing specialist facilities and services for those in the community who might have special needs, libraries contribute to health and well-being. Such benefits will only be achieved if the library provides equality of access for all. Much information is now more easily accessible online – indeed, some is only available online – and libraries are uniquely positioned to facilitate access to resources which may be too costly for individuals (e.g. the cost of the basic hardware, Internet access or the resource subscription).

Libraries play a key role in providing information, promoting knowledge and developing skills for people of all ages and all walks of life. From children's first steps in listening to stories and learning to read, to providing quiet spaces for study, and supporting older people in using new technologies, libraries contribute to the delivery of literacy targets, information literacy and digital inclusion.

Good libraries play an important part in shaping people's views of local government. In order to deliver quality,



Outcomes and impacts	Core entitlements	Quality indicators
People in Wales will be able to increase their knowledge / skills having used the library	2, 3	1, 3, 5
People in Wales will be able to take part in reading and other cultural events organised by the library service	3	4, 6, 9, 10, 12
People in Wales will feel part of a community using the library service	3, 11	1, 7, 8
People in Wales will be able to take advantage of the opportunities offered in the digital world using the library service	2, 6, 7	4, 9, 11
Personal health and well-being is enhanced by using the library	3, 4	1, 4
People in Wales can participate more fully in local affairs via the facilities in the library	3, 6	3, 11

Other core entitlements and quality indicators are concerned with the effective management of services, which underpins the effective delivery of the outcomes and impacts. All can be related to one or more of the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act; details are given in Section 5.

### 1.3. Fulfilling the statutory duty

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964<sup>2</sup> makes it a duty of the relevant Welsh Ministers (currently the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure) **“to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided by local authorities and to secure the proper discharge by local authorities of the functions in relation to libraries conferred upon them as library authorities under this Act”**.

<sup>2</sup> Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75/contents>

Under the same Act, library authorities are required to **“provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”**.

Since 2002, the Welsh Ministers have fulfilled this duty through the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS, or the Standards). The first framework ran from 2002 to 2005 with subsequent frameworks covering the periods 2005-08, 2008-11, 2011-14 and 2014-17. Each individual framework evolved to reflect the changing needs and expectations of public library users. In addition to the fulfilment of statutory duties, the WPLS framework plays a valuable role in supporting the development of public library services.

There is general consensus among stakeholders concerned with the provision of public library services in Wales that these performance measurement frameworks, introduced and administered

by the Welsh Government for the sector, have helped public library services to improve in a number of ways and in key areas. For example, as a result of the Standards, there have been significant improvements in service areas such as the delivery of requests and provision of ICT facilities and services, leading to enhanced outcomes for library customers.

Local authorities have a statutory duty (under section 7 of the Act) to provide a library service and encourage both adults and children to make full use of that library service. The performance indicators listed here will assist the Welsh Government in assessing whether or not local authorities in Wales are fulfilling their duties under the 1964 Act, and in assessing the comprehensiveness and efficiency, in terms of the manner of delivery, of library services in Wales.



#### 1.4. Community managed libraries

Since about 2014 the number of independent and semi-independent libraries in Wales, frequently referred to as community managed libraries, has increased. Guidance issued by the Welsh Government in 2015 on community managed libraries has now been updated and is included here, at Section 6, rather than in a separate document, as previously. It includes criteria to be fulfilled in order that a community managed library might be included in the library service's annual return as part of the statutory service, and details of the data to be provided on all community managed libraries.

#### 1.5. The sixth quality framework

The aims of this sixth framework of Welsh Public Library Standards are to:

- enable the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure to fulfil the statutory requirements of the 1964 Act in respect of superintending the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service by local authorities;
- provide a robust assessment of the performance of library services;
- have clear links to the Welsh Government's programme for government<sup>3</sup>, to ensure credibility across local government in Wales;
- be relevant and useful to all local authority library services in Wales;
- be transparent, easily understood and accepted by all stakeholders;
- incorporate outcome measures to show the benefits of using libraries;
- act as a driver for improvements to library services and local communities; and
- minimise the burden of data collection on library authorities.

<sup>3</sup> Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021, available at <http://gov.wales/docs/strategies/160920-taking-wales-forward-en.pdf>

The framework has been based largely on the fifth framework, updated to take account of the changed local authority environment within which library services must work, and continues to provide opportunities for libraries to deliver services in innovative ways and the flexibility to make best use of the resources available to them. It will come into operation on 1st April 2017, and libraries will make their first report against its requirements in the summer of 2018. This document describes the new framework in detail.

**Section 2** lists the 12 core entitlements, and self-assessment prompts will be provided in the guidance for library staff.

**Section 3** describes the 16 quality indicators, which are of three broad types.

- Input indicators are concerned primarily with what the library service will provide for the citizens of Wales in key areas in order that the core entitlements can be delivered.
- Output indicators are concerned with levels of use. When considered alongside input indicators, they can give an indication of the efficiency of delivery of the service.
- Outcome and impact indicators measure the direct or indirect effects of the library service on its users, and on the wider community. They show the difference libraries make to people's lives.

Most indicators will be reported every year; some may be reported once in the three year period, for example, where user survey data are required. For some indicators, formal targets are set, although such targets are not appropriate in all cases.

Libraries will be expected to compare their performance on all indicators with previous years, and to meet the targets where these are set. Benchmarking of authorities will be possible when all results are available.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/museums-archives-libraries/?lang=en> for details



The nature of the geography, distribution of population and other factors within individual authorities can cause significant variations in the approaches necessary to the planning and delivery of library services. For this reason, Welsh library authorities are offered alternatives against which to measure their services in some of the indicators described, and should choose the most appropriate to reflect their circumstances.

Definitions of the various terms and guidance on methods of data collection are not specified in this document; however these will be included with the reporting template provided to library services, and are available on request<sup>4</sup>. In all cases, detailed guidance on data collection and calculation will be provided to library authorities to ensure consistency and



comparability. Existing data will be utilised wherever practicable. Where appropriate, international standard definitions and methods have been adopted.

**Section 4** of this document details the reporting requirements, which include an element of self evaluation and descriptive reporting in addition to key service statistics and the performance indicators, and describes the monitoring and assessment process. A holistic view of assessment will be taken.

Library performance will be judged on all the aspects of the framework, including compliance with the core entitlements, ranking on the quality indicators, how many quality indicators are met in full and in part, and the narrative providing

evidence of the impact of the service on individuals and the community.

Library provision spans a range of Welsh Government outcomes, offering a range of services which often support two or more of the outcomes simultaneously. The Well-being of Future Generations Act<sup>5</sup> lists seven broad areas of priority, and **Section 5** of this framework document aligns the core entitlements and quality indicators with these areas, giving examples of the contribution the library service makes.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en> for details

# 2. Core entitlements

A set of core library entitlements for Welsh citizens was first incorporated into Making a Difference, the fifth quality framework of Welsh Public Library Standards. These entitlements have been revised and refocused for this sixth framework, to enable the public to know what they can expect from their public library service.

These entitlements are initially self-assessed by each authority. A number of questions are specified in the Guidance document, which the authority is required to take into account when making their self-assessment. It is not necessary to be able to answer every question positively to meet the core entitlement, but justification for the assessment, which could refer to other relevant provision, should be provided in the return. The self-assessment will be moderated by MALD, the Independent Adviser, and a small Reference Group of senior librarians to ensure consistency between authorities.

**WPLSCE 1** Libraries in Wales will be free to join, and open to all.

**WPLSCE 2** Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.

**WPLSCE 3** Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.

**WPLSCE 4** Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.

**WPLSCE 5** Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.

**WPLSCE 6** Libraries in Wales will lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.

**WPLSCE 7** Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.

**WPLSCE 8** Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.

**WPLSCE 9** Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.

**WPLSCE 10** Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from those services.

**WPLSCE 11** Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.

**WPLSCE 12** Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.



# 3. Quality indicators



The quality indicators in this sixth framework build on the previous framework, and include additional measures covering the outcomes and impact of the library service. They fall into two broad types; those which are provided for monitoring and benchmarking performance over time and between authorities, and those which have specific targets.

## WPLSQI 1 Making a difference

This selection of indicators assesses the impact of library use on people's lives in a variety of ways. Although some are relevant to other areas of this framework, they are grouped together here as being key to the overall customer experience.

Authorities will report, at least once in the three year period:

- a) the percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills;
- b) the percentage of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out;
- c) the percentage of adults who have found helpful information for health and well-being at the library;
- d) the percentage of adults who experience the library as an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place;
- e) the percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives.

Data will be collected from user surveys of adults and of children, which should be conducted in accordance with good statistical practice, at least once during

the three-year period of this framework. Authorities will be given guidance on the conduct of the survey and wording of questions to ensure comparability. Respondents answering 'not applicable' or 'don't know' should be excluded from the calculation.

Authorities may conduct more frequent surveys if they wish to do so and report accordingly.

### **WPLSQI 2 Customer satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is a key element of library performance. As with the indicators concerned with library impact (QI 1), some of these are relevant to other areas of this framework, but are grouped together here as being key to the overall customer experience.

Authorities will report:

- a)** the percentage of adults who think that the choice of books available in the library they use is 'very good' or 'good';
- b)** the percentage of adults who think that the standard of customer care in the library they use is 'very good' or 'good';
- c)** the percentage of adults who think that the IT facilities provided in the library they use are 'very good' or 'good';
- d)** the percentage of adults who think that overall the library they use is 'very good' or 'good';
- e)** the average overall rating out of ten awarded by users aged 16 or under for the library they use.

Data will be collected from user surveys of adults and of children, which should be conducted in accordance with good statistical practice, at least once in the three-year period of this framework.

It is appreciated that not all authorities wish to use the CIPFA PLUS suite of survey instruments (from which the above indicators are drawn), and guidance will be issued to ensure that authorities which

choose to use their own surveys will have comparable results. Authorities may conduct more frequent surveys if they wish to do so and report accordingly.

### **WPLSQI 3 Support for individual development**

Libraries shall ensure that the following services are offered in all static service points open for 10 hours per week or more:

- a)** basic support in the use of the ICT infrastructure provided (including Wi-Fi) and in accessing the range of electronic information resources available;
- b)** training to improve literacy, numeracy, information and digital skills, and assistance in developing or enhancing capabilities to identify and access appropriate resources efficiently and effectively; critically evaluate information; and apply information appropriately to further objectives, such as educational, employment, health and well-being.

Training programmes may be developed and delivered with appropriate partners outside the library service;

- c)** support for users to access local and national e-government resources;
- d)** reader development programmes/ activities for both adults and children.

The format of the support offered and frequency of any specific timetabled sessions should be appropriate both for the size of the service point and local community needs.

### **WPLSQI 4 Support for health and well-being**

- a)** Libraries shall ensure that the following services are offered in all static service points open for 10 hours per week or more:
  - i. Book Prescription Wales scheme
  - ii. Better with Books scheme



- iii. Designated health and well-being collection
  - iv. Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours - leaflets, books etc
  - v. Signposting to health and well-being services
- b)** Authorities will report the number of static service points open for 10 hours per week or more in which the following services are available on a regular basis
- i. Shared Reading groups (reading aloud together)
  - ii. Book clubs (discussion of chosen book)
  - iii. Macmillan cancer or other health information partnerships
  - iv. Dementia Friendly services
  - v. Mental health awareness activities

### WPLSQI 5 User training

This indicator assesses the extent to which sessions offered match local need, and the impact of those sessions for the participants. Reader development sessions; literacy, numeracy, information and digital skills sessions; ICT sessions, etc., should all be included. Include sessions arranged in collaboration with partner agencies. User training may have a general audience, or be targeted towards specific sub-groups of the population e.g. children, carers, unemployed persons, etc.

Sessions may require advance registration, or be open to all on a drop-in basis. Include sessions also reported under WPLSQI 4.

Authorities will report:

- a)** the total number of attendances at pre-arranged training sessions organised and/or hosted by the library service at its own service points or at other locations within the authority during the year, divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000;



- b)** the percentage of attendees at such sessions who said that attendance helped them to achieve their goals;
- c)** the number of customers helped by means of informal training during the year, divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000.

Part b) of this indicator should ideally be derived from a simple feedback form offered to all attendees, but may be based on sessions during one or more sample periods.

Part c) of the indicator may be derived by sampling. Authorities will be provided with guidance to ensure consistency of reporting.

### **WPLSQI 6 User attendances at library events**

The purpose of this indicator is to estimate the attraction of library events for the library's population to be served, and the extent to which such events meet local need.

- a)** Authorities will report the total number of attendances at events and activities organised by the library service at its own service points or at other locations within the authority during the year, divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000.

Include events with literary, cultural or educational intent, e.g. author visits, reading groups, literary discussions, digital and information literacy workshops, genealogy workshops, health literacy, financial literacy, job seeking etc.

Events specifically for children are included, such as storytelling, poetry, music. Include events delivered by partner organisations in collaboration with the library service.

- b)** Libraries shall ensure that events or activities for those who have special requirements are offered in all static service points open for 10 hours per week or more. The events or activities may be promoted specifically for an intended group, or open to all, but with a clear target group in mind.

Special requirements can include physical and health impairment, economic disadvantage (e.g. long-term unemployed), cultural difference (e.g. non-native speakers, new arrivals), educational background, or other circumstances that require special library services. Authorities should provide specific examples of such events and list joint working with relevant social inclusion organisations and partners.

### **WPLSQI 7 Location of service points**

No stipulation is made with regard to minimum opening hours of static libraries (on a site by site basis) however, authorities are asked to consider the viability of service points which are open for fewer than 10 hours per week. Equally, no stipulation is made with regard to length or frequency of mobile library stops, however it is expected that mobile libraries will visit each scheduled stop at least 12 times per year.

Authorities shall ensure that they meet the following criteria for the location of service points and mobile library stops, according to their population density:

Population density	% of households	Distance from library
20 or more persons per hectare	At least 95%	Within 2 miles of a static service point
More than 1 but fewer than 20 persons per hectare	At least 75%	Within 2.5 miles (or 10 minutes travelling time by public transport) of a static service point, or within ¼ mile of a mobile library stop
1 person or fewer per hectare	At least 70%	Within 3 miles (or 15 minutes travelling time by public transport) of a static service point, or within ¼ mile of a mobile library stop

### WPLSQI 8 Library use

Seven measures of use of the library are required, covering the physical and the electronic resources provided. Together, they assess the library's success in attracting users to its services.

Authorities will report:

- a) the total number of visits to library premises during the year divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000;
- b) the total number of external visits to the library's website during the year divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000;
- c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000.
- d) the total number of library members
- e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
- f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- g) the total number of electronic downloads

The data used should be those as reported to CIPFA for the public library actuals return.

### WPLSQI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material

This and the next indicator are designed to ensure adequate investment and an appropriate balance of resources across various sections of the community.

- a) Library authorities should achieve
  - either a minimum of 243 items acquired per 1,000 resident population or a minimum spend of £2,180 per 1,000 resident population annually.

Books and e-books, periodicals, audio-visual material and electronic resources are all included.

Authorities should include their contribution to consortium purchases where relevant.

- b) Library authorities will report
  - The percentage of the material budget spent on resources for children.

## WPLSQI 10 Welsh language resources

This indicator is designed to ensure materials in Welsh are provided in line with local requirements and the socio-demographic characteristics of the population.

### a) Authorities should achieve:

Either a minimum of 4% of the material budget, or, a minimum of £750 per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population.

Authorities will also report:

### b) Total issues of resources in the Welsh language per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population.

## WPLSQI 11 Online access

### a) Every static library should provide

- i. A minimum of one device giving public access to the Internet and networked digital content. Computers, laptops, tablets, and other mobile devices are all included.
- ii. Wi-Fi access for users to bring their own laptops or mobile devices.

### b) Authorities will report the total number of devices giving public access to the Internet

- i. Available in static libraries, per 10,000 resident population
- ii. Available in mobile libraries.

Computers, laptops, tablets, and other mobile devices are all included.

### c) Authorities will report the percentage of available time allocated for use of public access ICT equipment actually taken up by users. This should be aggregated across all libraries in the authority, including mobiles.

## WPLSQI 12 Supply of requests

This indicator measures the efficiency of the public library service in responding to requests for material which is not immediately available.

Authorities should achieve:

- a) A minimum of 64% of requests for material to be notified to the user as being available within 7 calendar days of the request being made;
- b) A minimum of 79% of requests for material to be notified to the user as being available within 15 calendar days of the request being made.

Requests for pre-publication material shall be counted from the date of publication. Material which is not owned by the library but must be acquired by purchase or by inter-library loan is included in the calculations.

## WPLSQI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications

- i. Library authorities shall achieve total establishment staffing levels for the service of 3.6 (full time equivalent) per 10,000 resident population. Staff who do not work directly in service provision, e.g. cleaners, are excluded. Include only those staff paid from the library service budget.
- ii. The total number of staff (full time equivalent) holding recognised qualifications in librarianship, information science or information management per 10,000 resident population should not fall below 0.65. Staff with qualifications in cognate areas, such as ICT, heritage or leisure management or education and learning may be included in the calculations if they occupy posts on the library staff establishment which require those qualifications, and when the qualifications held are relevant to their current roles and functions within the library service.



Include only those staff paid from the library service budget.

- iii. The designated operational manager of the library service shall, either be the holder of recognised qualifications in librarianship, information science or information management, or, have undertaken relevant library management training within the last 3 years.

Authorities will also report:

- a) where this post sits within the local authority management structure;
- b) the post held by the most senior professional librarian (where different); and
- c) where that post sits within the local authority management structure.
- iv. A minimum of 1% of aggregate staff working hours should be spent in training and personal / professional development during the year. All library staff should

be encouraged to undertake training and development relevant to their role and responsibilities, and to improve their skills.

- v. Library authorities may offer members of the community the opportunity to volunteer, to support additional services in libraries managed and run by the library authority. Such opportunities can, for example, enhance the life skills and employability of individuals, contributing to tackling poverty outcomes.

Where there is community involvement in delivering the library service at a branch level, we expect there to be paid staff working alongside the volunteers in the libraries, for some of the time.

Library authorities that use volunteers to deliver additional services 'in house' (as opposed to community managed libraries) shall ensure:

- a designated volunteer coordinator

from the library service's permanent professional staff coordinates those parts of the service involving volunteer workers;

- each volunteer receives a written role description;
- legal requirements are met for each volunteer in relation to their role;
- both induction training and continuing training is provided for all volunteers;
- volunteers are appropriately supervised; and
- they have achieved, or are actively working towards, Investing in Volunteers accreditation<sup>6</sup>.

Authorities will report:

- a) the total number of volunteers across the year;
- b) the total number of volunteer hours during the year;
- c) whether they have accreditation status relating to the NOS or are working towards this accreditation.

Note that in order to meet this indicator in part, the service must achieve at least three of the five elements, including (iii), relating to the qualifications of the operational manager.

### **WPLSQI 14 Operational expenditure**

In the current economic climate it is not thought appropriate to set a target for overall library expenditure, but spending on the public library service will continue to be scrutinised closely.

Authorities will report:

- a) the total revenue expenditure per 1,000 resident population;
- b) the percentages of this total spent on staff, materials and information resources, maintenance, repair and replacement of equipment and buildings, and other operational costs;

<sup>6</sup> See <http://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/inyourcountry/iiv-wales> for more information



- c) total capital expenditure per 1,000 resident population.

Authorities which complete the CIPFA public library actuals return should use the same data here.

### WPLSQI 15 Cost per visit

This indicator is useful for justifying expenditure of public funds, giving a proxy for value for money, but it must be interpreted in conjunction with demographic indicators and quality indicators relating to use. It measures the cost of the library service related to the number of library visits, including virtual visits.

Authorities will report:

- The total expenditure on library staff and materials, net of generated income, divided by the sum of the number of physical visits to library premises (including mobiles) plus the number of visits to the library web site during the year.

Authorities which complete the CIPFA public library actuals return should use the same data here. The ratio will be automatically calculated from data provided for other indicators.

### WPLSQI 16 Opening hours

- i. Welsh public libraries should achieve a level of aggregate staffed (paid staff and/or volunteers) opening hours across all service points administered by the authority of no less than 120 hours per annum per 1,000 resident population.
- ii. Authorities will report the total number of unstaffed opening hours across all service points administered by the authority per 1,000 resident population.
- iii. This part of the indicator is concerned with the adequacy of the library service's maintenance programme and staffing strategy. Authorities will report:

- a) the total number of hours of unplanned and emergency closure of static service points as a result of building failure or staff unavailability as a percentage of the total planned opening hours of all static service points during the year;
- b) the number of mobile library stops and/or home delivery services missed as a result of vehicle failure or staff unavailability, as a percentage of the total number of planned mobile library stops and/or home delivery services during the year.

Scheduled opening hours not open as a result of adverse weather conditions, or any other cause beyond the library's control, are not included.



# 4. Reporting, monitoring and assessment

The statutory requirements of public library service provision in Wales are enshrined in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The performance indicators listed here will assist the Welsh Government in assessing whether or not local authorities in Wales are fulfilling their duties under the 1964 Act, and in assessing the efficiency of the manner of delivery of library services in Wales.

## 4.1. Reporting requirements

Each year, local authorities will be required to report their performance against the various elements of the framework. The return will include a compliance rating against the core entitlements – indicating whether these are fully met, partially met, or not met, with appropriate description / explanation. For all entitlements which are not fully met, the return should also include a strategy for improvement in the following year.

Individual authority returns will also include data showing performance against the quality indicators included in this framework, together with a comparison for the previous year. Where performance has declined, the return should include the authority's strategy to halt the decline. Where targets are not met, the return should include a narrative outlining proposals and a timescale to achieve these targets. These data will be drawn together to provide an overview of Welsh public library services as a whole, to assist with identification of good practice, and of areas where action may be required to bring about improvements.

Measurement of the impact of public library services – the difference those services make to people's lives – is not easily quantifiable. For this reason, a qualitative element will be included in the reporting.

Each authority's return should include at least one, but no more than four, specific case studies describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual, or on a group of individuals, during the year. This is expected to describe not only the service provided and the use made of that service, but also the outcomes for the individuals or members of group as a consequence. Guidance will be provided on the format of the case studies and appropriate material to include. Such case studies will build into a valuable source of evidence of impact and value, and will further promote the spread of good practice across Wales.

A second qualitative element of reporting will be a narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards both local authority agendas and wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals, including any relevant legislative frameworks. The purpose of this strand of reporting is to encourage libraries to be aware of the wider social drivers (e.g. health and well-being; digital inclusion including information literacy; literacy, including reading and the connection with digital literacy; community engagement and community benefits, including families, children and young people, older people, welfare reform; Welsh language and culture), to which their service should be able to demonstrate a contribution, and to make explicit their relevance and value to policy makers at local, regional and national level.

A short description of the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year will be included. Authorities will also be required to confirm that feedback in the form of opinion on the year's performances achieved by each library service has been

adequately considered by the member with responsibility for library services and by the relevant management, scrutiny and performance monitoring procedures.

A reporting template will be provided to authorities to ensure that reporting is consistent and comparable across Wales.

#### **4.2. Monitoring and assessment procedures**

The process of monitoring and assessing will be led by MALD: Museums Archives and Libraries division of the Welsh Government, and will follow the pattern established in earlier frameworks. Annual returns should be submitted by the deadline each year, and will be scrutinised for completeness by an independent reviewer and a peer reference group. The independent reviewer will then prepare a formal written feedback report, covering all aspects of the framework, including all quality indicators and narrative elements, which will be delivered to each authority in the autumn, in time to address any issues raised as part of their formal service planning process. This feedback will be formally disseminated to library authority chief executives and also to council leaders, scrutiny officers or performance managers as well as to the managers of library services. The annual reports will be made public, via the MALD web pages.

The independent reviewer will prepare a summary overview each year, including an analysis of overall performances, and significant trends within those performances, against the entitlements and quality indicators. The highest, lowest and median performances in Wales will be calculated for each indicator where this is possible. The overall analysis will be disseminated to all local authorities, usually during an annual seminar. At the end of the framework period a summary report will be published via the MALD web site.

The findings of these processes will be brought to the attention of the relevant Minister annually, highlighting achievements and trends and also problem areas, such as

declining performances, incidences of non-compliance or recurring failure, together with a diagnosis of the causes wherever possible. Noteworthy improvements in performances and improving trends will also be drawn to the Minister's attention.

The core entitlements and quality indicators set out in this framework deal with aspects of the library service which are considered by the Welsh Government to be necessary – but are not necessarily sufficient – for the delivery of a comprehensive and efficient library service under the terms of Section 10 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

As the ultimate sanction in the cases of failure to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service, the Welsh Government can institute an inquiry, issue a direction and transfer the library functions of a library authority to itself or to another authority/organisation. Sanctions would be invoked in cases where, for example, a significant number of the core entitlements and performance targets are not reached, there is a failure consistently to reach the average performance of comparable Welsh authorities with no evidence of improvement over time, or performance across the service as a whole is consistently falling year on year.

To date, it has not been necessary to implement any of these sanctions due to constructive discussion between the relevant parties.

# 5. The Well-being of Future Generations Act



Libraries have a clear contribution to make to the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

## 5.1. A prosperous Wales

Development of a skilled and well-educated population is a fundamental aspect of public libraries' activity. Examples of how this is achieved include providing access to a world of lifelong learning through relevant book stock and online information, and the provision of free IT equipment, broadband and Wi-Fi, which supports education, small businesses and job seeking. Core entitlements 2, 3, 6 and 7, and quality indicators 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 15 all monitor aspects of public libraries' contribution to this goal.

## 5.2. A resilient Wales

Social and economic resilience is supported by encouraging and promoting individual personal development, enabling people and society to adapt to changing circumstances.

Regular consultation with users ensures that the services themselves are resilient and able to adapt to changing needs. Two core entitlements are particularly pertinent here, 3 and 11, together with quality indicators 4, 11 and 14. Examples of how this is achieved in practice include support for greater community involvement in running library services, and book stock that encourages a more resilient lifestyle with access to IT so people can self-educate about the issues.

### **5.3. A healthier Wales**

Physical and mental well-being is a key offer of public libraries, not only by providing information on which to base informed choices for the benefit of health in the future but also designated collections and schemes such as Book Prescription Wales titles loaned through libraries, which directly benefit individuals with health concerns. Relevant core entitlements for this goal are 3 and 4; quality indicators 1, 4, and 6 monitor activity.

### **5.4. A more equal Wales**

Libraries are welcoming, inclusive and offer pro-active outreach and public engagement activities in deprived and socially excluded communities. Support for government initiatives such as Universal Jobmatch and Universal Credit enable those without IT skills or facilities to fulfil their potential. Core entitlements 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7, and quality indicators 3, 4, 11, 13 and 14, all monitor public libraries' contribution to this goal.

### **5.5. A Wales of cohesive communities**

Libraries offer a safe neutral place within the community which provides opportunities for people to connect with each other. The one-stop-shop or hub model being developed in many areas further connects local communities with the services they need. Other examples include support for community involvement through the provision of information about the local area. Core entitlements 1, 3 and 5, and quality indicators 1, 6, 13 and 16 monitor aspects of public libraries' contribution to this goal.

### **5.6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**

With explicit provision in the current framework covering the provision of material in the Welsh language, libraries are well placed to contribute in this area. They promote and protect Welsh culture and language, and encourage participation in the arts and recreation through the availability of a good range of stock in Welsh, and a host of cultural events and activities. Core entitlements include 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, and 10, and quality indicators 2, 6, 8, 9 and particularly 10 are all relevant here.

### **5.7. A globally responsible Wales**

A commitment to make the most efficient use of resources is embodied in the quality indicators. MALD works with the British Standards Institute and International Standards Organisation in developing and using quality indicators for libraries which conform to ISO 11620.

Further, the borrowing of books is a great recycling tool, reducing the impact on the environment. Libraries in Wales work together in book purchasing consortia, digital/e-book consortia and the All-Wales Library Management System. Core entitlement 12 is directly related to global good practice, while quality indicators 14 and 15 are related to the balance and efficiency of service provision.

# 6. Community managed libraries



Since about 2014 there has been a growing number of independent and semi-independent libraries in Wales, frequently referred to as community managed libraries. Guidance issued by the Welsh Government in 2015 on community managed libraries has now been updated and is included here rather than in a separate document, as previously.

Welsh Government guidance on community managed libraries recommends that for such libraries to be considered as part of the authority's statutory provision, they must meet the core entitlements contained within the Standards framework. For the purposes of the sixth framework of public library standards, community managed libraries which receive ongoing support from the local authority library service in terms of shared resources, qualified staff and a 'seamless' customer experience can be considered for inclusion in the return.

For example, libraries conforming to the following models may be eligible:

- Elements of resources and staff provided or co-ordinated by the local library service, with the building in community ownership and a contribution towards staffing from the community council with the staff employed by the library service.
- Limited resources and regular staffing (defined hours) provided by the local library service, the building in community ownership and assistance from volunteers.

Models involving the transfer of the building and resources to the community and entirely run by volunteers with minimal (or no) ongoing assistance from the local library service in managing the facility are not eligible for inclusion.

It is appreciated that different models may exist within a single authority, so that some community managed libraries may be included in the returns, while others may not. For full consideration of whether community managed libraries can be included in the statutory service, the following minimum criteria should be met, along with meeting all the core entitlements:

- A service level agreement with the local authority public library service to include resource sharing activities such as inter-library loans;
- Paid staff, whether funded by the local authority library service or from other sources (e.g. community councils) available for 50% of the library opening hours specified in the service level agreement;
- The provision of a range of material, e.g. books, multimedia/audio-visual, Internet access and staff to support access to and utilisation of these resources;
- Authority support for the ICT facilities, which should be free at the point of use;
- Full access to and use of the local authority's library catalogue including the ability to place reservations, for members of the public. Paid staff would be expected to have access to the LMS.

The purpose of these criteria is to ensure that the public receives a high quality, comprehensive and efficient public library service that is deemed worthy of the statutory service. It is possible for a community managed library to achieve all the proposed criteria outlined above, and if they meet these and the core entitlements, they could be considered for inclusion as part of the local authority's statutory provision of public library services.

As identified above, this is achievable by entering a partnership with their local authority public library service and/or working with community councils and groups.

## 6.1. Reporting and data collection

If community managed libraries are considered by the authority to be part of the statutory service and are included in the annual return, the guidance document on what data to gather and how applies to all the libraries. The same rigour should be used to gather data in community managed libraries as in other libraries.

In addition, the Welsh Government wishes to monitor the support and resources provided to community managed libraries within the authority, and the extent to which they have been included in the indicators in this framework.

All authorities will therefore be asked to provide the following information, as part of the contextual data in the return:

- a)** The number of community managed libraries for which the authority provides
  - i. Paid staff
  - ii. Full access to and use of the local authority's library catalogue for members of the public
  - iii. Support for the ICT facilities
  - iv. Shared and rotated stock services
  - v. A service level agreement including resource sharing activities such as inter-library loans
- b)** The total annual aggregate opening hours of community managed libraries within the authority.
- c)** The total number of staff hours per annum dedicated to supporting community managed libraries. Include front-line staffing and management support and administration time.

Separate figures for the above will be sought for those community managed libraries included in the return (i.e. those meeting all five bullet points above), and those not included, where available.



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**Page 5:** Top: Llanelli Library, Middle: Rhyl Library, Bottom: Torfaen Libraries

**Page 7:** Top: Computer training group, Prestatyn Library, Bottom: Cwmbran Library

**Page 8:** Llanelli Library

**Page 9:** Carmarthen Library

**Page 11:** Shared reading group at Ty Cae Nant Residential Home, Torfaen Libraries

**Page 12:** Reading at home service, Torfaen Libraries

**Page 14:** Baby and toddler group, Prestatyn Library

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# Welsh Public Library Standards Sixth Framework: Rhondda Cynon Taf

## Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Rhondda Cynon Taf's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

### 1. Executive summary

Rhondda Cynon Taf met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf is achieving 5 in full and 1 in part. Four were not met.

Rhondda Cynon Taf libraries are clearly valued by members of the local community. The number of visits per capita, and customers rating the choice of books, customer care and library overall 'good' or 'very good' are all above the median for Welsh library authorities. It would appear that users are gradually returning to the service after the Covid pandemic, and visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library authorities. However, Rhondda Cynon Taf is facing a challenging financial situation. The planned cuts to staffing and the book budget are a serious concern given that the service is already falling short of targets in these areas. The proposed reduction in staffing may well hamper the service's ability to make improvements in other areas where it is not currently able to meet targets, including opening hours and activity provision.

- Rhondda Cynon Taf performs well for many areas of customer feedback; customers rating the choice of books, customer care and library overall 'good' or 'very good' are all above the median (Q12).
- User training opportunities are well-supported; attendance at pre-arranged user training is now recovering from the pandemic and is above the median for Welsh library services (Q15).
- The library space is well-used; visits per capita are in the top quartile of Welsh library services (Q18).
- The service did not experience any unplanned closures or missed home deliveries (Q16).

### 2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

#### 2.1. Core entitlements

Rhondda Cynon Taf reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

## 2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Rhondda Cynon Taf is achieving 5 in full and 1 in part. Four were not met.

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Support for individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	√	
b) Information literacy and skills training	√	
c) E-government support	√	
d) Reader development	√	
QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being		Met in full
i) Book Prescription Wales scheme	√	
ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme	√	
iii) Designated health & well-being collection	√	
iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours	√	
v) Signposting to health & well-being services	√	
QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements	x	Not met
QI 7 Location of service points	√	Met in full
QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material		Not met
Acquisitions per capita	x	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	x	
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources		Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	√	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	-	
QI 11 Online access:		Met in full
a) i) Public access to Internet	√	
ii) Wi-Fi provision	√	
QI 12 Supply of requests		Not met
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	x	
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	x	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
i) Staff per capita	x	
ii) Qualified staff per capita	x	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	√	
iv) CPD percentage	x	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	x	Not met

## 2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are

based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Rhondda Cynon Taf completed its adult user survey in March 2022 and its children's user survey in March 2023.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	90%	=7/16	58%	90%	98%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	85%	11/16	41%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	96%	=9/17	82%	96%	100%

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Rhondda Cynon Taf provided an impact statement about the provision of increased space and activities for local communities to support more non-traditional use of the library and to help combat loneliness and isolation. This provides customers a chance to connect with others in a warm, safe, welcoming, non-judgemental environment. With the closure of other community venues and the cost-of-living crisis, this was seen as especially important. Initially, as part of the Places to Connect programme, three Coffee and Craft sessions were set up in three libraries and were attended by a total of 95 people and attendee feedback was positive. Building on the success of these events, eight other events were organised and attended by 239 people. A crochet club has been started at Treorchy library and 'Community Puzzle' tables set up at several libraries. Feedback from two Ukrainian settlers has led to the establishment of a library 'Coffee and Chat' group for people whose first language is not English. The events have reportedly contributed to increased confidence and wellbeing for many community members and resulted in more diverse use of the library space.

## 2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Rhondda Cynon Taf's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	62%	12/16	24%	69.5%	90%
c) health and well-being	42%	14/16	35%	66.5%	94%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	93%	=14/16	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	94%	=4/16	80%	91%	99%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/17	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	83%	10/16	65%	86%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	=3/17	94%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.4	7/16	8.0	9.3	9.7
QI 5 User training					
a) attendances per capita	17	8/22	1	10.5	222
c) informal training per capita	8	18/19	5	131	424
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	129	15/22	13	165	559
QI 8 Library use					
a) visits per capita	2,559	4/21	781	2,106	4,814
b) virtual visits per capita	490	13/22	124	537.5	7,979
c) active borrowers per capita	83	17/22	43	106.5	167
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita	44	=15/22	13	53	864
QI 11 Online access					
a) Computers per 10,000	6.82	16/22	3.32	7.99	16.99
b) % of available time used by the public	11%	=9/19	7%	11%	77%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>1</sup>					
(v) a) total volunteers	7	-	0	8	256
b) volunteer hours	1,032	-	0	583.5	14,014
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£8,932	17/21	£6,726	£11,476	£27,330
b) % on staff	69%	7/21	46%	64%	78%
% on information resources	16%	5/21	5%	12%	21%
% on equipment and buildings	3%	=11/21	1%	3%	29%
% on other operational costs	12%	14/21	1%	15%	35%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	=12/21	-£479	£145	£2,865
QI 15 Net cost per visit <sup>2</sup>	£2.31	8/19	£0.41	£2.76	£6.22
QI 16 Opening hours <sup>3</sup>					
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0%	=1/21	0%	0.07%	0.95%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0%	=1/19	0%	0%	3.74%

<sup>1</sup> Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

<sup>2</sup> Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

<sup>3</sup> Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

### 3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

#### 3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Rhondda Cynon Taf achieves the median for percentage of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out (QI1). It is below the median for feedback from adult users in relation to Making a difference, but it is acknowledged that the timing of surveys over the pandemic period may have an impact on this measure. Customers rating the choice of books, customer care and library overall 'good' or 'very good' are all above the median (QI2). Three of the four 'Living Well in Wales' campaigns took place during this period, and activities, events and information resources were organised for: Dip into reading, Age Well and Places to connect. A number of organisations involved in promoting healthy lifestyles and wellbeing make use of libraries, including Foodwise (healthy eating), baby massage and NHS long Covid and depression sessions (QI4). Whilst attendance at user training sessions is lower than pre-pandemic levels, the number of attendees has been increasing steadily throughout the year and overall, attendance at user training was above the median (QI5). Participation in informal training was below the median, however. During this period, the service has looked to both re-establish existing partnerships that were lost during the pandemic and also to create new partnerships with organisations that wish to make use of facilities to provide training sessions.

#### 3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Rhondda Cynon Taf did not meet the target for events and activities for those who have special requirements as only 11 of the 13 static service points offered such provision. Whilst the number of events and activities increased throughout the year, event attendance was below the median (QI6). Visits per capita are in the top quartile of Welsh library services, however, and the service reports that this is now only 16% below pre pandemic levels. The number of virtual visits per capita is below the median and Rhondda Cynon Taf reflects that this may be the result of people returning to traditional borrowing practices after the pandemic. Whilst the survey reports that the number of active borrowers and adult loans have increased, the service is currently below the median for these measures, as well as for children's issues (QI8).

#### 3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Rhondda Cynon Taf does not meet the target for acquisitions (QI9), although it is close to the median for materials spend per capita. The service reports that performance against this target is unlikely to improve given the current financial situation and the service has been advised that a percentage of the book budget will be offered up as an efficiency saving in 2023- 2024. The service meets the target for acquisition of Welsh language materials, but issues are below the median per capita Welsh speaker (QI10). Rhondda Cynon Taf acknowledges that, whilst Welsh language issues have increased on last year, they are still remain below pre-pandemic levels. The service also offers an extensive programme of Welsh language events and activities.

Rhondda Cynon Taf is below the median for PCs per capita, but achieves the median for the percentage of time these are actively used (Q111). The service notes that the demand for, and usage of, public access computers has fallen to its lowest level since public access PCs were introduced. Whilst these computers provide the only method by which some users can gain access to the internet, increasingly library users are relying on their own devices and making use of the library WiFi. Rhondda Cynon Taf is now taking the approach of providing smaller numbers of PCs for everyday use, whilst maintaining larger numbers within IT suites in some larger libraries which can be used for classes and training purposes. The service does not meet the target for supply of requests (Q112) and notes that its performance against this target is unlikely to improve as budgetary pressures lead to a reduction in its book budget.

### 3.4. Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Rhondda Cynon Taf does not meet the targets for overall staffing per capita or qualified staff per capita, although it does have a qualified operational manager. The number of qualified staff has reduced by one (as a result of retirement), but two members of staff are currently working towards professional qualifications. The service is also below the target for proportion of staff time devoted to training (Q113). Rhondda Cynon Taf notes a lower than average number of volunteers this year as the council's work placement scheme was suspended for the majority of the reporting period. Total revenue expenditure is below the median and the service reports that this is down on last year as a result of a 0.5% compulsory efficiency saving imposed on services throughout the council in response to the current financial position (Q114). Rhondda Cynon Taf does not meet the target for opening hours (Q116), but it notes that the cluster model means that at least one branch library and an area library is open in each cluster for 6 days of the week to enable access for customers within the resources available. The service did not experience any unplanned closures or missed home deliveries. Its mobile libraries are yet to return to service following the Covid pandemic and it continues to run an expanded 'At Home' service for members of the community that cannot visit a static library. A decision is expected later in the year on whether this model will be adopted as a permanent change of service.

## 4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Rhondda Cynon Taf highlights how libraries are contributing towards the seven wellbeing goals prioritised by the Welsh Government. Some examples highlighted are as follows.

- **A prosperous Wales:** supporting Job Clubs and back to work programmes with Communities for Work Plus and other local organisations; volunteering opportunities offered within the Library Service help people gain additional skills to improve their job prospects.
- **A resilient Wales:** the council's policy of developing local hubs with libraries at their heart provides local access to a wide range of services for education, leisure, support and advice. These help to build resilience in the community by providing network structures, social support and community bonds and

good information and communication systems that assist in informing the public.

- **A more equal Wales:** providing audio books, large print books, Welsh language stock, books in braille and dyslexia-friendly books.
- **A Wales of cohesive communities:** close ties with the Business Improvement Districts at Pontypridd, Aberdare and Treorchy allow libraries to play a key role in programmes that involve the whole community thereby raising the profile of the library whilst providing resources and locations for events to take place.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:** supporting and participating in Welsh Language events including Parti Ponty and Shwmae Day.
- **A globally responsible Wales:** information and advice on local initiatives, plus recycling bags and battery drop off points.

## 5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Rhondda Cynon Taf highlights increasing visitor numbers and issues as a priority. The service notes the challenges presented by further efficiency savings for 2023/24, which include replacing the mobile library service with an enhanced 'At Home' service, the loss of one Library Assistant post and a 10% cut to the book budget. Its priorities will therefore be:

- Continuing to build audiences, returning usage to pre-pandemic levels
- Carrying out a service review
- Working with SCL Cymru and the Welsh Government on the re-tendering process for an All-Wales Library Management System.

## 6. Conclusion

Rhondda Cynon Taf libraries are clearly valued by members of the local community. The number of visits per capita, and customers rating the choice of books, customer care and library overall 'good' or 'very good' are all above the median for Welsh library authorities. It would appear that users are gradually returning to the service after the Covid pandemic, and visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library authorities. However, Rhondda Cynon Taf is facing a challenging financial situation. The planned cuts to staffing and the book budget are a serious concern given that the service is already falling short of targets in these areas. The proposed reduction in staffing may well hamper the service's ability to make improvements in other areas where it is not currently able to meet targets, including opening hours and activity provision.

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## Appendix 2 - Impact Statement – Places to Connect Programme

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Library Service has, since returning to regular service provision after the Covid-19 pandemic, seen an increase in people using libraries for longer periods of time and for more non-traditional uses.

To help to combat loneliness and isolation brought about by closure of other community venues, and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the ability of people to heat their own homes, the library service has provided more space and activities for local communities.

The chance to meet with people in a warm, clean, safe space with friendly and welcoming staff who would not judge or question people's reasons for being there is seen as vital.

As part of the Places to Connect programme, three 'Coffee and Craft' days were set up at three libraries with 95 people attending these events. Feedback received includes the following:

*"This was a fab session, there was a good community spirit, I can't wait for the next one."*

*"I only intended to stay for an hour but ended up staying all day. It was great to sit and chat with people, I hadn't seen (NAME) for years!"*

*"This Library is excellent! It's really given me a lift to be here today."*

Due to the success of these events, 8 other events were organised and attended by 239 people. In considering feedback, a crochet club has been established at Treorchy Library and 'Community Puzzle' tables set up at several libraries. These allow people to sit for extended periods of time in the library either on their own or with other community members.

Feedback from two Ukrainian settlers who attended events has led to a 'Coffee and Chat' group in the library for people whose first language is not English. The success of this group has led to discussion of further groups.

These events have increased the wellbeing and confidence of many of our community members and resulted in more diverse use of library spaces.

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## Appendix 3

### Welsh Performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards 2022-2023

<b>Library Service</b>	<b>Core entitlements (12)</b>	<b>Quality indicators met in full (10)</b>	<b>Quality indicators met in part (10)</b>	<b>Quality indicators not met (10)</b>
Blaenau Gwent (Aneurin Leisure Trust)	12	7	2	1
Bridgend (Awen Cultural Trust)	12	5	2	2
Caerphilly	12	7	1	2
Cardiff	12	9	1	0
Carmarthen	12	5	1	4
Ceredigion	10	7	1	2
Conwy	12	9	1	0
Denbighshire	12	8	2	0
Flint (Aura Leisure and Libraries Ltd)	12	8	2	0
Gwynedd	12	8	2	0
Isle of Anglesey	10	8	2	0
Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust	12	9	1	0
Monmouthshire	12	5	1	3
Neath Port Talbot	12	8	1	1
Newport	11	7	1	2
Pembrokeshire	12	6	2	2
Powys	10	7	1	2
Rhondda Cynon Taf	12	5	1	4
Swansea	12	7	1	2
Torfaen	12	5	1	4
Vale of Glamorgan	10	7	1	2
Wrexham	7	5	3	1

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