

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

29 NOVEMBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

LIBRARY SERVICE PERFORMANCE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Cabinet the Council's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Fifth Framework for 2015-16 and to gain approval for the Library Service's strategic principles.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" Library Service for the benefit of all residents of the County Borough.
- 2.2 The Library Service has a key role to play in contributing towards all of the Council's Corporate Priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2016-20:
- Smarter use of resources
 - Helping people to be more self-reliant
 - Supporting a successful economy

3. Background.

- 3.1 Public Library Services in the United Kingdom were made a statutory service of Local Government by legislation enacted in 1964 - The Public Libraries and Museums Act. This legislation requires local authorities to provide a "comprehensive and efficient library service for persons desiring to make use thereof". Responsibility for overseeing the terms of the 1964 Act in Wales rests currently with the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure, who has a duty under Section 1 of the 1964 Act "to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library services 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 by or under the 1964 Act".
- 3.2 In order to assist in discharging this responsibility, the Welsh Government established in 2002 a Framework of Standards for local authority library managers, the Welsh public library standards [WPLS]. New targets of provision and performance are set every 3 years. An overall objective of the standards is that

libraries offer all the services and facilities listed as core entitlements with quality being measured via a range of performance indicators and impact measures. The current Framework of Standards, “Libraries Making A Difference”, is the fifth, 2014-17, and, in its second year, required local authorities to meet this range of provision and performance targets for public libraries by March 2016.

- 3.3 Every year Bridgend CBC as the Public Library Authority is required to submit a WPLS annual return for consideration by assessors. A report is issued in turn by MALD (formerly CyMAL), the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government who have responsibility for administering the Framework; the report represents the considered view of the assessors on the Council’s performances for the given year.
- 3.4 Bridgend CBC transferred the management of a range of cultural services, including the library service, to Awen Cultural Trust from 1st October 2015. The statutory duty to provide the library service and report on its performance remains with the Council but Awen, under the terms of the management agreement, provides the Council with the information it needs to satisfy itself that the service is meeting the desired outcomes.

4. Current Situation / Proposal.

- 4.1 Attached at **Appendix 1** is the 2015/16 report from MALD in response to the Library Service self-assessment return against the fifth Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17.
- 4.2 The MALD Report paints a positive picture of the library service in Bridgend, highlighting improvements in a number of key areas and demonstrating how the transfer of the libraries function to Awen Cultural Trust has provided further opportunities for developing the service. 17 of the 18 core citizen entitlements were met during 2015-16 (with the other met in part) whilst, of the seven quality indicators with targets, six were fully met and one in part. This compares with four being met in full in 2014-15.
- 4.3 The range of quality indicators that were fully met underlines how the library service plays an important role in promoting citizens’ digital skills and inclusion, how libraries are located close to where their users live and have, in spite of financial pressures, maintained opening hours. In fully meeting the two extra targets in 2015-16 the library service has demonstrated its commitment to meeting the needs of Welsh-language readers and of supporting children’s literacy through increased purchasing of children’s books and by programming events and activities to engage with this critical demographic.
- 4.4 The quality indicator not fully met relates to staffing levels. This, however, can be interpreted as efficient use of staffing resources and any attempt to meet this standard would need a significant increase in financial resources as well as

jeopardising performance against other targets. Such staffing efficiencies have contributed to the service significantly reducing revenue expenditure and the cost per visit falling to below the Welsh median.

- 4.5 Overall, MALD recognises the improvements in stock provision and welcomes the maintenance of performance, despite budget reductions. The performance of Bridgend's library service shows "careful management and a generally positive overall direction".
- 4.6 It is very pleasing to note that the service achieved a 97% overall satisfaction rating from its customers.
- 4.7 As a summary, in 2015/16 libraries in Bridgend issued 450,230 physical items of stock, processed 53,343 requests and generated 449,004 visits. The service registered 5,744 new members, taking the overall number of registered members to 74,706. It recorded 83,224 IT sessions.
- 4.8 The role of the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) in maintaining levels of service across the nation's libraries during an unprecedented period of change and austerity should not be denied. It would be fair to say, however, that, as yet, the standards frameworks have yet to fully embrace the evolving landscape across Wales' public libraries and the rigidity and occasionally contradictory nature of some standards does not always sit well with the agility and flexibility of services which benefit, as in Bridgend, from Councils' far-sighted decisions to transfer them to charitable trusts.
- 4.9 Whilst Cabinet will note Bridgend's improved performance against WPLS in 2015-16 it may also wish to consider that in meeting outcomes required by the Council, Awen Cultural Trust may deliver the library service in a way which may not meet the short-term requirements of the standards. For example, Awen may choose (because of the excellent quality of the book stock in the County Borough's libraries) to make a positive decision to reduce the investment in stock on a temporary basis and instead focus more on other strategic outcomes such as improving digital skills or improving library spaces. Similarly, reducing the number of fixed public access PCs in libraries, whilst reducing performance against WPLS Quality Indicator 11, would allow the service to continue its gradual shift to utilising technology more familiar to modern users (such as iPads) and facilitating the customer-led, Wi-Fi-enabled trend of 'bring your own device'.
- 4.10 In view of the innovative decision to transfer services to Awen and the agreed focus on outcomes it is suggested that Cabinet agree the following strategic principles as a basis for developing the 2017/18 outcomes framework for the Cultural Partnership Agreement:

Developing new library spaces

- Continue to seek opportunities to improve library spaces and co-locate libraries with other complementary local services with the aim of creating 'cultural anchors', as recommended in Baroness Andrews' report "Culture and Poverty" (2014). The Welsh Government's Expert Review of Public Libraries (2014) commended Bridgend's good practice in "developing multi-use/co-located facilities with the aim of creating a more sustainable service". It explains that co-location improves the "visibility of the public library service" as well as increased levels of use, especially among families and young children.
- Cabinet noted the opportunity to develop a proposal in October 2016 for a flagship redevelopment of Maesteg Town Hall which would include improved library provision and the Council in partnership with Awen Cultural Trust will also seek solutions to improve library facilities in Porthcawl. Initially in Porthcawl there is the opportunity to explore the potential use of Town Heritage Initiative funding and bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop the Grand Pavilion site, although this is currently at a very explorative stage. Both projects will encourage participation and engagement in cultural activities as well as produce wider economic benefits. Efficiencies and added-value can also be gained by consolidating specialist library services within these hubs.
- Re-defining the library space should also underpin future developments, acknowledging the changing behaviours, habits and demands of 21st Century lifestyles.

Children's literacy & reading

- Despite the ongoing transformation of public libraries, reading will continue to be at the heart of what a library service does. Libraries should aim to improve the literacy of people of all ages, support reading for pleasure, enhance wellbeing and provide unbiased access to sources of trusted information.
- The library service has a particular role in improving children's literacy, a goal which has a direct impact on BCBC's corporate improvement priorities. A rolling programme of refurbishment of children's libraries will make them more attractive destinations for young people, increase the number of young library members and contribute towards improvements in children's literacy by increasing opportunities for reading for pleasure, a proven determinant of enhanced educational and social outcomes. Moreover, an important factor in the performance of libraries is providing a persuasive and well-rounded offer for younger users.

Digital skills agenda

- The Expert Review of Public Libraries highlights opportunities for public libraries arising out of technological developments, from taking on a key role in tackling digital exclusion with the backdrop of Universal Credit to coordinating the range of e-services into a coherent, attractive offer. Patterns of library usage demonstrate how users are gradually changing their behaviour and increasingly engaging with the online services offered by the library. Usage of ICT facilities accounts for approximately 20% of library visits, although MALD recognises an over provision of

traditional PC's against a changing pattern of use. Annual loans of e-books, e-audio and e-zines increased in 2015-16 to 25,000 from a standing start three years ago, almost one quarter of book reservations are placed online via the WebOPAC and two-thirds of book issues in Bridgend Library are affected through the RFID self-issue machines.

- In a survey of December 2015, 43% of those using ICT facilities in Bridgend's libraries reported doing so because they had no access at home. Ensuring that citizens are digitally-included by being able to access all the benefits of being online is a key national priority and one of many ways by which public libraries can have a real impact in society by working together to raise ambitions. Libraries are ideally placed to attract the 'final 20%' of people who have not yet achieved the transition to digital. Developing these services further and ensuring that the public library retains its role as the default 'community IT helpdesk' must be at the heart of our future strategy. They should also support the digital-competence agenda set by Welsh Government. This will require changing what technology is available.

Wellbeing

- Libraries will develop their role in improving the wellbeing of citizens and preventing them from requiring more complex and expensive interventions further down the line. They should contribute to the preventative health agenda and can have a particular impact on areas of mental health and of course the older person's agenda.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There are no effects upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The BCBC Equalities Impact Assessment Toolkit has been utilised, which indicates that this report will have no impact on specific equality groups and disability duties.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The Council's provides an annual payment to Awen Cultural Trust for the provision of a range of cultural services, including library provision, as part of a partnership agreement.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 (1) Cabinet is recommended to consider and note the content of the report and appendix, recognising a successful year of progress against the Welsh Public Library Standards.

(2) It is recommended that Cabinet approve the strategic principles for development of the ongoing partnership with Awen Cultural Trust.

Mark Shephard
CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES
November 2016

Contact Officer: Mark Shephard, Corporate Director Communities

Telephone: 01656 643380

Email: Mark.Shephard@bridgend.gov.uk

Background documents:
WPLS Assessment

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Bridgend (Awen Cultural Trust)

Annual Assessment Report 2015-16

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Bridgend's annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to Museums, Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government.

1) Executive summary

Bridgend meets 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full, and one in part.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Bridgend achieved 6 in full and one in part, an improvement over last year.

There has been marked improvement in areas relating to stock provision this year, and the transfer of the service to Awen Cultural Trust has provided opportunities for the library service to continue to improve. The return in general was well written and presented, although evidence of the impact of the service is currently somewhat weak.

- Bridgend conducted an impact survey in November 2015, with 37% of adults feeling that the library service has made a difference to their lives. One case study showed good evidence of the impact of the library service for a disabled user. 98% of attendees at training sessions said that attendance had helped them to meet their goals.
- All static libraries provide the full range of services in support of individual development, and levels of informal training have increased since last year.
- Usage of some physical services has fallen slightly with visits and issues both below the median for Wales as a whole. The numbers of members and active borrowers are above the median for Wales as a whole, and attendance at library events is also above average.
- There has been significant progress compared to last year in stock provision, with Bridgend now achieving the quality indicators for up to date and appropriate reading material. Performance is close to the median for Wales in most areas, with the second highest spending per capita on material in the Welsh language.
- Staffing has been an issue with many vacant posts, and a fall of some 20% in overall staffing levels compared to last year. Transfer of the prison library service to an alternative provider contributed to the fall. Professional staffing levels continue to meet the target, one of only nine authorities to do this.
- Revenue expenditure has fallen by 18% compared to last year, with efficiency savings enabling an increased proportion to be spent on materials. Net cost per visit is £2.58, and below the median for Wales as a whole.

Considering the four areas in the framework (*Customers and communities; Access for all;*

Learning for life; and Leadership and development) in comparison to the rest of Wales, Bridgend continues to show a mixed performance with indicators of good and poorer performance in all areas.

Compared to the previous year, the improvements in stock provision are welcomed, and levels of performance have generally been maintained, despite budget and staffing cuts. The return and performance show careful management and a generally positive overall direction.

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 the core entitlements, the quality indicators which have targets, the quality indicators showing performance against others, and impact measures. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is made in Section 3.

a) Core entitlements

Bridgend meets 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full, and one in part. The area in which it only partially meets the entitlement is Leadership and development, where the library website is under development and the strategy is not yet completed or available.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Bridgend is achieving 6 in full, and one in part:

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	✓	
b) Skills training	✓	
c) Information literacy	✓	
d) E-government support	✓	
e) Reader development	✓	
QI 5 Location of service points	✓	Met in full
QI 8 Up-to-date reading material:		Met in full
a) Acquisitions per capita	✓	
or Materials spend per capita	✗	
b) Replenishment rate	✓	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Met in full
a) % of material budget on children	✓	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✗	
or Spend on Welsh per capita	✓	
QI 10 Online access:		Met in full
a) All service points	✓	
Computers per capita	✓	
b) Wi-Fi provision	✓	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met

a) Staff per capita	✗	
b) Professional staff per capita	✓	
c) Head of service qualification/training	✓	
d) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓	Met in full

This represents an improvement over the position in 2014-15, when QI 8 and QI 9 were only partially met, and is amongst the best in Wales.

c) Impact measures

The framework contains three indicators which seek to gather evidence of the impact that using the library service has on people's lives. Through these and other indicators it is possible to see how the library service is contributing towards educational, social, economic and health and wellbeing local and national agendas. These indicators do not have targets. Not all authorities collected data for the impact indicators, and ranks are included out of the numbers of respondents stated, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Bridgend conducted an impact survey of adults in November 2015, and expects to undertake a survey of young people in late 2016 or early 2017.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	n/a		86%	93%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	37%	12/13	36%	87%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a		57%	73%	93%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	98%	4/17	85%	97%	100%

Bridgend provided 2 impact case studies:

- Support provided to the Follow Your Dreams Tech Club for autistic children and their carers
- A disabled lady who began using the library to improve her computer literacy, and has *"come such a long way, and I never thought I could have accomplished any of it."*

The first of these clearly describes the provision, and would have benefited from feedback from users regarding the difference the club has made. The second provides better evidence of the real difference the library service has made.

d) Quality performance indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow performance to be compared between authorities. The following table summarises Bridgend's position for 2015-16. 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 obtained from customer surveys which only need to be carried out once during the three

year framework period, or those where relevant data elements were not available to some authorities. Figures reported in respect of last year for QI 4 to QI 16 are repeated for convenience of comparison.

Note that indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2014/15	Rank
QI 1 Making a difference							
a) new skills	23%	13 /13	23%	72%	92%		
c) health and well-being	34%	12 /13	26%	58%	93%		
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	7 /13	84%	97%	100%		
QI 2 Customer satisfaction							
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	5 /14	74%	89%	97%		
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	3 /14	90%	97%	99%		
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	97%	7 /14	92%	97%	99%		
Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2014/15	Rank
d) child rating out of ten	n/a		8.0	9.2	9.5		
QI 4 User training							
a) attendances per capita	18	15	5	30	390	27	10
c) informal training per capita	75	17 /19	3	195	1017	107	17 / 21
QI 6 Library use							
a) visits per capita	3,180	18	2,467	3,967	6,185	3,330	19
b) virtual visits per capita	810	16	340	976	2,475	736	14
c) active borrowers per capita	164	9	45	157	273	176	8
QI 7 attendances at events per capita							
	362	4	60	223	666	395	2
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public							
a) equipment	26%	17	20%	31%	68%	30%	17
b) Wi-Fi services	n/a		20%	60%	90%	n/k	
QI 12 Supply of requests							
a) % available within 7 days	71%	12	57%	71%	86%	72%	7
b) % available within 15 days	81%	19	71%	86%	96%	80%	19
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications							
(v) a) total volunteers	17	12	0	18	103	16	10
b) total volunteer hours	632	11	0	582	3,699	544	11
QI 14 Operational expenditure							
a) total expenditure per capita	£10,984	17 /21	£7,516	£12,749	£18,760	£13,370	14
b) % on staff	72%	3 /21	40%	58%	79%	71%	3
% on information resources	16%	5 /21	7%	13%	23%	13%	11
% on equipment and buildings	1%	19 /21	1%	3%	20%	2%	19
% on other operational costs	10%	19 /21	0%	20%	39%	14%	17
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	14 /21	£0	£272	£4,677	£0	16
QI 15 Net cost per visit							
	£2.58	7 /21	£1.83	£2.43	£3.53	n/a*	
QI 16 Opening hours (see note)							
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.01%	13	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	0.03%	13
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	1 /19	0.00%	0.71%	23.44%	0.0%	1 /19

*Note: Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority. * Income data for 2014-15 not available to calculate this figure.*

3) Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators are divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance against the quality indicators within these four areas, and compares results with those from the first year of the framework.

a) Customers and communities

Bridgend carried out an adult customer survey in November 2015, with below average results on the impact measures, but above average customer satisfaction. It fully met the standard for individual development, with all static libraries providing the full range of facilities and services. Attendance at pre-arranged sessions is below average, explained by the retention of the Cyberlink ICT training team within Adult Learning following the library service's transfer to the Awen Cultural Trust. 98% of attendees said that attendance had helped them to achieve their goals, an increase from 95% last year. Levels of informal training have increased, and are now above the median for Wales as a whole.

b) Access for all

Bridgend has 99% of its population within easy reach of a library, although the number of visits to library premises per capita has fallen slightly, by 4.5% since last year. Virtual visits have increased by 9.4% since last year, but both physical and virtual visits per capita remain below the median for Wales. The numbers of library members and active borrowers have fallen slightly, but both remain above the median for Wales. Attendance at library events per capita has fallen slightly compared to last year, but remains above the median for Wales.

c) Learning for life

Bridgend has made significant progress in meeting all quality indicators in this area in full this year. At 3.95% the percentage spend on material in Welsh only narrowly misses the target, although the target for spending per capita on material in Welsh is met, and is the second highest in Wales. Bridgend has increased spending on material for children, and now meets this target, in support of its strategic aim to improve children's literacy.

Targets for online access continue to be met, despite one suite remaining with the council following the transfer to Awen Cultural Trust. There has been a further slight fall in the proportion of time for which ICT facilities are used, attributed to the historic over-provision of PCs, and customers' increased use of Wi-Fi on their own devices. All static service points provide Wi-Fi access, although the authority cannot differentiate usage in libraries from that in other buildings at present; anecdotally, this is thought to be increasing.

There has been a very slight fall in the percentage of requests fulfilled within 7 days compared to last year. The percentage filled within 15 days has increased slightly, despite a significant reduction in staffing on the delivery van service, but remains below the median for Wales.

d) Leadership and development

A number of factors have affected staffing over the year – vacant administrative posts have not been filled, some posts which were formerly library posts have been re-classified

as central roles with a part-time library element, two posts were not transferred to the Trust, and the contract to provide prison library services ended, with a transfer of staff to the new provider. The result has been a fall of some 20% in overall staffing levels, failing to meet the target, but at the median for Wales as a whole. The levels of professional staff continue to meet the target, however, and the head of service is a Chartered Librarian. Reported CPD activity has increased, and the target has been met this year. The trust used 17 volunteers, one more than last year, giving an average of 37 hours each, mostly in connection with work experience placements.

Revenue expenditure has fallen by 18% compared to last year, as a result of savings under the local authority's financial strategy, and efficiencies following the transfer to Awen. Within this, the percentage of expenditure on operational costs has fallen, allowing an increase in the proportion on materials. Total spending per capita is below the median for Wales. Gross cost per visit at £2.75 has fallen by 16% compared to last year, while the net cost per visit at £2.58 is now below the median for Wales as a whole. Opening hours have been maintained, are above the target set, and the highest in Wales. 0.01% of opening hours were lost to emergency closure of static service points, an improvement over the figure of 0.03% last year; no mobile stops were missed during the year.

4) Strategic context

Bridgend CBC has identified three improvement priorities to which the library service makes a significant contribution, with activities described in the areas of tackling poverty, educational attainment, supporting people, health and well-being, and culture and heritage.

5) Future direction

Library services were transferred to Awen Cultural trust on 1st October 2015, with a degree of stability offered by a fixed management fee for the first 2½ years. Awen's strategy for libraries will be published during 2016/17 and it is expected to focus on children's literacy and digital skills.

6) Conclusion

There has been marked improvement in areas relating to stock provision this year, and the transfer of the service to Awen Cultural Trust has provided opportunities for the library service to continue to improve. The return in general was well written and presented, although evidence of the impact of the service is currently somewhat weak.