

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

30 JANUARY 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

WELSH LIBRARY STANDARDS - PERFORMANCE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the Council's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Fifth Framework for the period 2016-17 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 The provision of Public Library Services in the United Kingdom was made a statutory service for local government as a result of The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. This legislation requires local authorities to provide a "comprehensive and efficient Library Service for persons desiring to make use thereof".
- 3.2 The responsibility for overseeing the terms of the 1964 Act and how it is applied in Wales rests currently with the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport who has a duty under Section 1 of the 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".
- 3.3 In order to assist in discharging this responsibility, in 2002 the Welsh Government established a Framework of Standards for the management of Local Authority Library Services, by local authorities, the WLGA and other relevant bodies. As part of this framework, new targets relating to provision and performance are reviewed and set every three years. One of the overall objectives of the standards is that libraries offer all the services and facilities listed as core entitlements within the framework with quality being measured via a range of performance indicators and impact measures. The current Framework of Standards is the fifth, "Libraries Making A Difference-2014-17", and is in its third and final year, requiring Local

Authorities to meet this range of provision and performance targets for public libraries by March 2017.

- 3.4 On an annual basis, Bridgend Council as the Public Library Authority is required to submit a Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) annual return for consideration by assessors. A report is issued in turn by the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD) of the Welsh Government, who have responsibility for administering the Framework. The report produced represents the considered view of the assessors on the Council's performance for the given year.
- 3.5 On 1st October 2015, BCBC transferred the operational management of a range of cultural services, including the Library Service, to the Awen Cultural Trust. 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 required on performance in relation to the standards to satisfy itself that the service is meeting the desired outcomes.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 Attached as Appendix 1 is the 2016/17 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 overall assessment underlines the quality of the Library Service being delivered to the citizens of the County Borough of Bridgend by Awen as part of the partnership agreement with BCBC. The report highlights the programming of a good range of library based events and activities and acknowledges that the service benefits from detailed strategic planning and management. Although there are some challenges which, in the main, relate to a reduction in performance against traditional measures which is a common theme across Library Services in Wales and beyond, the report concludes that "the service has considerable potential, particularly building on its engagement strengths and more future strategic opportunities".
- 4.3 The MALD report explains that the Library Service in Bridgend now meets all eighteen of the core citizen entitlements in full and also in relation to the seven target based quality indicators, five were fully met and one part met.
- 4.4 The assessment that the service meets a wide range of both core entitlements and quality indicators shows that the Library Service plays an important role in promoting citizens' digital skills and inclusion, that the locations of libraries are close to where their customers live and, in response to the medium term financial strategy of the Council, has continued to maintain opening hours and service availability. The Library Service has demonstrated its strategic commitment to supporting children's literacy through increased purchasing of children's books and by programming events and activities to engage with this important population group.
- 4.5 Only one quality indicator was not met in 2016-17 and this was the result of a strategic decision to prioritise investment into the purchase of materials for young people based on identified local need. This highlights one of the challenges resulting from the Welsh Public Library Standards, whereby attempts to further develop and measure a wide range of inputs and outcomes may not contribute to all

desired outcomes. The MALD report indicates that BCBC has maintained its level of book acquisitions within the Awen provided service, but not met one indicator relating to the percentage of the book fund invested in books for children. The fact that only one quality indicator has not been met, relates to meeting the definition of the standards rather than the spirit and aspirations of the framework to respond to local needs. The new 2017-2020 framework of the WPLS has been revised to prevent such a scenario from recurring.

- 4.6 The focus given to offering an engaging and varied range of events and activities for children and young people is reflected in the fact that attendances at such events organised by libraries in Bridgend is the third highest in Wales in relation to population.
- 4.7 The case studies provided to Welsh Government as part of the Authority's standards return demonstrate how the Library Service contributes to a range of outcomes which go far beyond the traditional view of what a library does. For example, Maesteg Library's outreach work with vulnerable adults in day care facilities helps to reduce social isolation, digital drop-in sessions in libraries help older users to use social media and government websites whilst coding clubs help young people engage with STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects, build confidence and develop new skills.
- 4.8 The service's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards should be considered in the context of a £300,000 reduction in library budget between 2011 and 2015 and a further £625,000 saving against the portfolio of transferred services to Awen since its inception in 2015. Moreover, as reported to Cabinet in 2016, in relation to delivering the outcomes required by the Council, Awen Cultural Trust may need to review the delivery of the Library Service in a way which may not meet the short-term requirements of all of the entitlements and indicators because of locally identified needs and strategic prioritisation e.g. 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 deemed locally important. This could include improvement of digital skills, developing library spaces or enhanced marketing of library events and activities. This approach, approved by Cabinet in 2016, will continue to provide a strategic focus for the development of the Library Service and will better suit the aspirations and needs of the citizens of the County Borough.
- 4.9 Welsh Government publishes Welsh Public Library Standards assessment reports on its website which enables Bridgend's performance to be compared and contrasted with that of other Local Authorities. For example in 2017-18, of the quality standards with related targets, Bridgend, performed better than identifiable comparators amongst other local authorities.

Service development planning 2018-19

- 4.10 BCBC, as part of its partnership agreement with Awen Cultural Trust and its agreed service development plan for 2017-18, made a strategic commitment to improve efficiency and meet present-day demand across the portfolio of services that were transferred to Awen. An options appraisal is being progressed linked to the Medium Term Financial Strategy to identify a range of opportunities where further

efficiencies can be considered across the Awen contract whilst being mindful of the statutory duty as the library authority and related responsibility for the related standards.

- 4.11 BCBC, through its partnership with Awen Cultural Trust, currently operates two Mobile Library Services including the traditional Mobile Library Service that visits customers according to a published timetable at identified locations. Secondly, there is a “Booklink” service that visits referred housebound customers in their own homes. Awen have previously agreed with BCBC to review the mobile library service and that review has been conducted and is being considered within the terms of the contract.
- 4.12 The rationale for the continuation of a traditional Mobile Library Service is changing over time. It is recognised that within any related review it would be important to establish the detail of accessibility and impact on service usage of any proposed changes and also that the Booklink service is more than a Library Service. For the housebound it provides a value for money intervention that supports people to be self-reliant and remain in their own homes. The larger mobile library vehicle is approaching the end of its lifespan and cost effective alternatives will need to be considered.
- 4.13 In November 2015, Cabinet gave approval for the Council’s continued approach to library development through the Life Centre and cultural-hub model in partnership with Awen Cultural Trust. This approach gave impetus to the aspiration to redevelop and remodel Maesteg Town Hall, incorporating a new library that would replace the existing split-site provision in the town and create a building that would reflect both the heritage and potential of Maesteg.
- 4.15 Building on principles of co-location of library facilities and in recognition of the proposed redevelopment of the Sunnyside site, the potential has been identified to relocate in the redeveloped Maesteg Town Hall the resources currently housed at the Local and Family History Centre at Ty’r Ardd, Bridgend, which could create the first purpose-built local heritage centre for the County Borough as well as releasing space within Ty’r Ardd.
- 4.16 The co-location model has already been taken forward within the Healthy Living Partnership with GLL/Halo Leisure directly operating Library Services at Ogmere Valley Life Centre and Garw Valley Life Centre and it will be important to ensure that performance is maximised across the library estate. Awen also currently operate Library Services within Halo Facilities at Bridgend Life Centre and Maesteg Sports Centre.
- 4.17 The focus on Library Service development and library related performance will be integrated within the annual service development planning process for 2018/19 recognising both opportunities and challenges in relation to WPLS.
- 4.18 An opportunity has also been identified in relation to the renewal and replacement of ICT infrastructure to ensure that approaches recognise changes in service user behaviours including accessing digital services and self-service based systems. It is also recognised that there are people who remain digitally excluded and that Library Services are well placed to support their development.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

5.1 There is no effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessments.

6.1 An EIA would be undertaken at the time of any change to the current model of operating services. An EIA was conducted when the partnership with the Awen Trust was established indicating positive outcomes would be delivered.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 There are no identified financial implications to the proposals and all proposals will need to work within existing or reduced budget provision.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 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.

8.2 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the strategic principles for development including the potential co-location of facilities and options for the mobile library service to be progressed as part of the service development plan for 2018/19.

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10 Background documents:

WPLS Assessment 2015-16

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Bridgend County Borough Council (Awen Cultural Trust)

Annual Assessment Report 2016-17

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 now meets all of the 18 core entitlements in full, an improvement over the position last year.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Bridgend achieved 5 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 1.

The service is providing a good range of events and activities and benefits from detailed strategic planning and management. There has been a slight decline in performance in several areas this year, however, and the quantitative evidence of impact remains slightly below average. Overall the service has considerable potential, particularly building on its engagement strengths and more future strategic opportunities.

- Bridgend carried out an impact survey of children in March 2017, with 82% indicating that the library helps them learn and find out new things, and with an average rating of 9.0 out of 10.
- The number of attendances at events and activities organised by the library increased by 36% and Bridgend currently has the third highest level of attendances per capita in Wales.
- All static libraries provide the full range of services in support of individual development with all staff offered refresher courses in digital resources, although levels of informal training have decreased since last year.
- Usage of some physical services has fallen slightly with Bridgend recording the third lowest number of visits per capita in 2016-17. Virtual visits per capita have increased although they remain below the median for Wales.

Following improvements in stock provision in 2015-16, 2016-17 has seen the level of acquisitions per capita stabilise somewhat and it remains above the median for Wales. Overall materials expenditure per capita has fallen slightly, however it remains above the median for Wales as a whole and meets the target.

- The percentage of materials expenditure spent on children's material is the fourth highest in Wales, and the service prioritises spend on children's resources to meet Authority-wide priorities. However, it is not awarded the target due to this over-provision on children's materials compared to the proportion of the population.

- A restructure at Library Manager level sees a slight fall in the number of staff; however the number of staff holding professional qualifications has been sustained and achieves the target – one of only seven authorities to achieve this in 2016-17.
- Following a decrease of 18% in 2015-16, revenue expenditure has fallen slightly in 2016-17 and it remains below the median for Wales. Net cost per visit is £2.72, and is currently above 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, performance is mixed, with small improvements in some areas balanced by a slight decline in performance in others.

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 now meets all of the 18 core entitlements in full, following investment in a new website.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Bridgend is achieving 5 in full, 1 in part and failing to achieve 1:

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:		Not met
a) % of material budget on children	✗	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✗	
or Spend on Welsh per capita	✗	

Quality Indicator	Met?	
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 is a poorer performance than last year in that Bridgend strategically focuses on children's stock to support literacy and educational attainment, spending 21% of the materials budget on children, but as a result fails to meet the target in QI 9 with this over-provision on children's materials compared to the proportion of the population. It has also failed to meet the target for spending on materials in the Welsh language this year.

c) Impact measures

The framework contains 3 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 an impact survey of children in March 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:	82%	18/19	68%	93%	100%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	37%	18/19	36%	86%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a		58%	82%	98%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	98%	5/19	80%	97%	100%

Bridgend provided 4 good impact case studies including quotes from users describing the difference the Library Service has made to them:

- Outreach work with vulnerable adults in day care and nursing home settings, reducing social isolation.
- Digital drop-in sessions for older users who have gained confidence in using social media and government web sites.

- One member of the Coding Club who has increased confidence and now helps others. The club has grown and draws users from a wide area.
- Users of the community delivery network including working with outside agencies to deliver additional services, and comments from users of the community bookshelves.

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 2016-17. 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 elements were not available to some Authorities. Figures reported in respect of the first 2 years of the framework 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	2015/16 Rank	2014/15 Rank			
QI 1 Making a difference										
a) new skills	23%	19	/19	23%	71%	93%				
c) health and well-being	34%	18	/20	26%	56%	94%				
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	12	/19	93%	98%	100%				
QI 2 Customer satisfaction										
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	6	/20	74%	90%	98%				
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	4	/20	90%	99%	100%				
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	97%	10	/20	92%	97%	100%				
d) child rating out of ten	9.0	12	/19	8.6	9.1	10.0				
QI 4 User training										
a) attendances per capita	19	17	3	34	248	18	15	27	10	
c) informal training per capita	60	17	/20	1	156	712	75	17 / 19	107	17 / 21
QI 6 Library use										
a) visits per capita	2,753	20	2,453	4,033	6,751	3,180	18	3,330	19	
b) virtual visits per capita	851	14	/21	341	922	2,299	810	16	736	14
c) active borrowers per capita	162	8	77	153	235	164	9	176	8	
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	489	3	62	214	496	362	4	395	2	
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public										
a) equipment	24%	17	/21	16%	32%	69%	26%	17	30%	17
QI 12 Supply of requests										
a) % available within 7 days	68%	15	/21	48%	70%	82%	71%	12	72%	7
b) % available within 15 days	79%	18	/21	65%	85%	96%	81%	19	80%	19
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications										
(v) a) total volunteers	14	14	0	24	209	17	12	16	10	
b) total volunteer hours	903	12	0	798	5,156	632	11	544	11	

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2015/16	Rank	2014/15	Rank
QI 14 Operational expenditure									
a) total expenditure per capita	£10,588	15/21	£6,745	£11,979	£16,968	£10,984	17/21	£13,370	14
b) % on staff	72%	5/21	46%	58%	75%	72%	3/21	71%	3
% on information resources	17%	4/21	4%	13%	25%	16%	5/21	13%	11
% on equipment and buildings	1%	19/21	0%	4%	20%	1%	19/21	2%	19
% on other operational costs	10%	19/21	9%	22%	37%	10%	19/21	14%	17
c) capital expenditure per capita	£209	12/21	£0	£341	£16,692	£0	14/21	£0	16
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.72	6/20	£1.50	£2.33	£3.30	£2.58	7/21	n/a*	
QI 16 Opening hours (<i>see note</i>)									
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.48%	0.01%	13	0.03%	13
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	1/19	0.00%	0.13%	8.33%	0.00%	1/19	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.

Data on Wi-Fi usage has only been provided by three authorities for 2016-17 and so is not included in the table above.

3) Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators are divided into 4 key areas. This section of the report outlines performance against the quality indicators within these 4 areas, and compares results with those from the first 2 years of the framework.

a) Customers and communities

Bridgend carried out a children's customer survey in March 2017, with below average results on both the impact measures and customer satisfaction. It fully met the standard for individual development, with all static libraries providing the full range of facilities and services and all staff were offered refresher courses in providing digital support to the public. Attendance at pre-arranged training sessions has increased slightly since last year, although it remains below the median for Wales. 98% of attendees said that attendance had helped them to achieve their goals, a similar level to last year. Following an increase last year, levels of informal training have decreased, and are below 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 average number of physical visits per capita declined by 13.4% in 2016-17,

and remains below the median for Wales as a whole. Virtual visits per capita have increased slightly over last year; however, they also remain below the median for Wales. Attendances at events and activities organised by the library have increased by 36% compared to last year, and Bridgend now records the third highest per capita level in Wales.

c) Learning for life

Bridgend has maintained the level of acquisitions over the last year and remains above the median for Wales as a whole. In support of its strategic aim to improve children's literacy, Bridgend has again increased spending on children's materials. 2015-16 saw a strategic decision to invest heavily in Welsh language materials, however, this year the onus has shifted to promoting the use of these resources so that the proportion of materials expenditure accounted for by Welsh language materials has fallen and does not meet the target.

Targets for online access continue to be met, although there has been a further slight fall in the proportion of time for which ICT facilities are used. Bridgend has indicated that it has introduced a programme to replace the least used computers with iPads and workstations for laptop users to combat the historic over-provision of PCs.

The percentage of requests fulfilled within 7 and 15 days have fallen slightly and they are both now below the median for Wales.

d) Leadership and development

Due to a restructure of management, the total number of staff has fallen slightly compared to last year; however, the average number of staff per capita is above the median for Wales as a whole. The levels of professional staff continue to meet the target, and the head of service is appropriately qualified. Reported CPD training has increased this year and the target has once again been reached. The proportion of staff time spent training at Bridgend is currently the third highest in Wales. The number of volunteers (14) has fallen slightly over last year, with each volunteer providing an average of 65 hours to the service. Revenue expenditure per capita has fallen by 3.6% over the last year; however, this follows an 18% decrease in 2015-16 and total revenue per capita remains below the median for Wales. The breakdown of expenditure is on a similar level to last year, with 72% accounted for by staff and 17% accounted for by materials – the fourth highest in Wales.

Opening hours have increased by 2.4% so that the average number of hours open per capita is above the target set and is the highest in Wales. No opening hours were lost to emergency closure of static service points and no mobile stops were missed during the year.

4) Strategic context

Bridgend CBC will continue its programme of co-location of libraries with complementary services. Work experience placements are being used to support digital inclusion. The Awen Cultural Trust 5 year plan is aligned to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, with a priority being to provide space and opportunity for people to enjoy vibrant cultural experiences.

5) Future direction

4 strategic priorities have been identified – to develop new library spaces; have a positive impact on children’s literacy and reading; support digital inclusion; and develop the library role in improving the wellbeing of citizens.

6) Conclusion

The service is providing a good range of events and activities and benefits from detailed strategic planning and management. There has been a slight decline in performance in several areas this year, however, and the quantitative evidence of impact remains slightly below average. Overall the service has considerable potential, particularly building on its engagement strengths and more future strategic opportunities.