



## CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

Dinas A Sir Abertawe

Councillor Robert Francis-Davies  
Cabinet Member for Enterprise,  
Regeneration & Development

*Please ask for:  
Gofynnwch am:*

**Scrutiny**

*Direct Line:  
Llinell  
Uniongyrchol:*

**01792 636292**

*e-Mail  
e-Bost:*

**scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk**

**BY EMAIL**

*Our Ref  
Ein Cyf:*

*Your Ref  
Eich Cyf:*

*Date  
Dyddiad:*

**22 December 2014**

Dear Councillor Francis-Davies,

### **Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel 10 December 2014**

The panel met on 10 December 2014 to consider the Welsh Public Library Standards – Annual Performance Review. The purpose of this meeting was to monitor and challenge performance and fulfil the Welsh Government's requirement to ensure that scrutiny is aware of the Council's performance against the standards.

We would like to thank you and Steve Hardman for attending the meeting to present the report and answer our questions. This letter reflects the main issues we discussed.

#### **Performance**

Overall we were satisfied that the Council is maintaining its performance in relation to the standards, with 5 fully complied with and 4 partially achieved. We discussed the targets that were partially achieved and the reasons behind these:

*WPLS 5: Acquisition of new items (per 1000 of population).* The service met the standard in relation to acquisition of new items for use by adults but failed to meet the standard in relation to under 16s. We were told that the reason for this is that the target for under 16s is based on the total population as opposed to the under 16 population. We were advised that if the under 16 population figure is used then standard is met. We were pleased to hear that 99% of under 16 users think the choice of books in Swansea is very, good, good or adequate.

*WPLS 6: Spend on Welsh Language materials*

We were advised that the WPLS target is based on the % of population in the Census who stated that they can read, speak and write Welsh. We were told that that the view of the service is that this over estimates the number of customers that can read Welsh; therefore the target is set too high. We were satisfied that the service is making best use of resources through concentrating Welsh Language stock in the main Welsh speaking communities, focusing materials on children and Welsh learners and also ensuring a large collection is available in Central Library. These measures in addition to inter library loans and regular stock circulation help to ensure an appropriate range is offered, given the resources that are available.

*WPLS 8: Ensure at least 23% of staff are formally qualified in library and information studies*

We were advised that the service has a ratio of 12% of qualified staff. However these staff are concentrated at senior and specialist post level, in order to make the best use of their skills. We were told that given the current financial climate it is difficult to increase these levels.

*WPLS 9: Total amount of floor space (per 1000 population)*

We agreed with your assessment that this indicator is not particularly useful, and also note that the target required by the standards is missed only by a small margin.

Overall, we noted that the standards provide a snapshot in time and mainly focus on quantitative information, therefore do not reflect the full picture of the work that goes on in Swansea's libraries. We were pleased to hear additional details about the wide range of services that libraries provide, including: events for children such as rhyme time, Welsh Language activities, seasonal events; home work clubs; exhibitions; work with partners such as the Police, RNIB; job clubs; audio book clubs; family history surgeries; support groups; any many others.

We were particularly pleased to hear that Swansea Central Library is amongst the top ten libraries in terms of number of items issued in the UK. However, we acknowledge that reducing resources are creating a challenging environment for the service.

**Community languages**

We discussed the provision that is made for additional languages other than Welsh, as this is not included in the WPLS. We were pleased to hear that the Library Service is able to offer options to library users who wish to obtain material in other languages, for example use of an inter library loan service and use of specialist suppliers to rent books on a temporary basis. This demonstrates an effective use of resources, particularly important as the requirements for community languages can change over time.

**Availability of services**

We discussed the availability of services to people unable to attend libraries for various reasons, generally to do with health/mobility issues, or residents in care homes. This is especially important since the cessation of the mobile library service. We welcomed the fact that the Library Service now provides an individually tailored service to housebound residents, through two members of staff who undertake home visits to assess a person's requirements and then deliver a selection of books. We were pleased to hear that this service is growing.

**Revised standards for 2015/16**

We welcomed the news that the Welsh Government will be revising the standards for 2015/16 in order to provide a greater focus on outcomes and impact achieved by library services as opposed to the more quantitative targets that are used now. We believe that this will provide a better reflection of the work and achievements of the Library Service. We will be interested to see how Swansea fares in the new standards when the standards are reported to us next year.

This letter provides our views on the WPLS Annual Performance Review but does not give any further recommendations; therefore a response is not required. However, this letter will be included in the next available agenda of the Scrutiny Programme Committee as the committee maintains an overview of all scrutiny activities, and monitors correspondence.

Yours sincerely,



**Councillor Mary Jones**

**Convenor, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel**

✉ [Mary.Jones@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:Mary.Jones@swansea.gov.uk)