



## Report of the Cabinet Member for Better Communities

Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel – 20<sup>th</sup> March  
2019

### **Position statement for Swansea Council Libraries performance in relation to Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) 2017 – 18.**

<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide the Scrutiny Panel with a report on the current position of Swansea Council Libraries performance in relation to the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) 2017 – 2018
<b>Content:</b>	This report presents an overview of the current legislation and explanation of the current Welsh Public Library Standards framework together with a position statement for 2017 – 18
<b>Councillors are being asked to:</b>	Consider the information provided and to forward views to the Cabinet Member via a letter from the Panel Convener
<b>Lead Councillor:</b>	Councillor June Burtonshaw, Cabinet Member for Communities
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#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 makes it a statutory duty of all local authorities to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”.

In order to help define the terms “comprehensive and efficient”, and to encourage and facilitate a development strategy for Welsh public libraries, the Welsh Government embarked on a series of assessment frameworks. This report is a response to the first year of the 6<sup>th</sup> quality framework, “Connected and Ambitious Libraries 2017-2020. (Appendix B)

## 2. Current position – Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS)

2.1 Swansea Council Libraries submitted its final response to the WPLS in June 2018. Museums Archives Libraries Division (MALD) have responded to the submission and a copy of the response is attached in Appendix A. The response underlines the current position of the library service, within the first year of the new Framework.

2.2 Summary of Welsh Government response to our 2017-18 return

- All service points provide a full range of support for individual development, and for health and well-being. Four case studies demonstrate the impact of the service on groups and individuals.
- Improved monitoring and reporting has enabled the service to provide more robust figures for informal training, attendance at library events / activities, and website use.
- Usage generally remains above the median for Wales, although there are reductions in the number of physical visits, active borrowers and overall book issues.
- Targets for overall acquisitions and for materials in the Welsh language are still not met, although the service is increasing its investment in Welsh language resources, with a greater emphasis on encouraging their use.
- Overall staff numbers, and the level of professional staffing have both fallen, and neither target is met. Numbers of professional staff are now close to the lowest in Wales, and the service is increasingly reliant on agency staff to maintain service delivery. The planned review of work plans / staffing needs will be key to ensuring service sustainability in this area.
- Total revenue expenditure has increased on 2016-17, with the average per capita investment in library services at the median level.

The full list of Quality Indicators and our performance is contained in Appendix A. Swansea Council Libraries met 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full. Out of the 10 quality indicators, Swansea achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 2, as follows:

### QI 9 Up to date and appropriate reading material

A library authority should achieve

- Either a minimum of 243 items acquired per 1000 resident population
- or a minimum spend of £2180 per 1000 resident population

To successfully achieve QI 9 the service would need to spend £533,000 a year on books and resources. Actual spend was £401,046.

### QI 10 Welsh Language Resources

A library authority should achieve

- Either a minimum of 4% of the material budget
- or a minimum of £750 per 1000 Welsh Speaking resident population

To successfully achieve Q10 the service would be required to spend £16,042 (4%) a year on Welsh Language materials. Actual spend for the period was £5545 (1.5%). The service is increasing its spend annually as more materials become available and we work to increase usage of Welsh Language materials in our libraries. Where identifiable we have included the budget spent on Welsh materials which are non book such as advertising and promotional budgets.

### QI 13 Staffing levels and qualification was partially met

Two elements were not met – these are:

- Library authorities shall achieve total establishment staffing levels for the service of 3.6 (FTE) per 10,000 resident population.
- The total number of staff holding recognised qualifications in librarianship, information science or information management per 10,000 resident population should not fall below 0.65

The QI for Staffing levels and qualifications QI13 is based on 3.6 fulltime equivalents of staffing per 10,000 population. We reported 3.38. The failure to recruit staff and reduction in management posts affects our ability to meet the indicator for 'Qualified staff'. The benchmark is 0.65 qualified staff per 10,000 population. We reported 0.28. For the purposes of this report, 'qualified staff' means library employees who hold a recognised library management qualification.

Formal qualifications for this indicator include first and higher degrees, or equivalent, the foundation degrees in information studies, and chartered librarians. It does not include qualified staff working in clerical roles or staff with library qualifications up to LAIS/NVQ level 3 or 4.

Two elements were met – these are:

- Head of Service qualification
- CPD percentage

## **3. Conclusions/Key Points Summary**

The report Summary describes a wide range of positive aspects for the service which are summarised below. It is also worth noting that the previous Service Manager was absent on long term sick leave for over a year, prior to retiring, but this 'gap' has been addressed with the appointment of a qualified, new Manager last summer. The service can now move on with focus and clarity on its wider objectives, which are closely linked with delivering the Council's Corporate Priorities. Service planning is currently underway and a new strategy for transformation, partnership working and cross Service integration in Culture, Place and the Council is under review.

The key objective is for a sustainable, resilient service that continues to provide a comprehensive and efficient service for Swansea. We continue to explore new ways

of working in order to achieve this within the parameters of the Council's priorities and available resources.

**4. Legal implications - there are no specific Legal implications arising from this report**

**5. Finance**

There are no direct financial implications arising immediately from this report although there are clear costs associated with moving to spend at the levels necessary to achieve the quoted individual standards as set out in this report. These are indicative figures only and total library spending will ultimately need to be contained within existing and likely future budgeted levels that Council will set.

***Glossary of terms: QI – Quality Indicator***

**Background papers: None**

**Appendices:**

Appendix A WPLS – Swansea CC Assessment Report 2017-18

Appendix B Connected and ambitious libraries Framework 2017-2020