



**Councillor Elliot King  
Cabinet Member for Equalities  
and Culture**

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Overview & Scrutiny

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29 November 2022

**BY EMAIL**

**Summary:** This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture. The letter concerns the meeting held on 8 November 2022 and the Welsh Public Libraries Standards Annual Performance Report.

Dear Councillor King,

On the 8 November, the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel met to discuss the Welsh Public Libraries Standards Annual Performance Report. The Panel are grateful to you, Karen Gibbins, Library Services Manager and Karen Davies, Principal Librarian, for attending to discuss and answer questions.

We understand the reporting period for this report was 2020/21 and therefore covers the Covid pandemic time when libraries were temporarily closed. We were pleased to hear that despite this, Swansea Libraries met all of the 12 core entitlements during this time and are meeting the obligations of the Public Libraries Act.

We recognise the importance of the library services but particularly during the pandemic and that as soon as was possible, access to free broadband and Wi-Fi in public libraries was provided to members of the public.

We also heard that use of E audio book services increased by 63% due to an investment by Welsh Government of £500,000 and we heard your concern that this number will drop unless the investment in eBooks is continued.

You made us aware that borrower numbers have reduced but were pleased to hear that you understand of some of the causes of this and are looking to address those issues.

We asked how you share best practice across library sites and you assured us that due to the challenge to learn and adapt and that best practice is shared within the context of using each libraries strengths. You made us aware of recruitment challenges and staff turnover and expressed your concern that this may be in part,

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due to the wages attached to library posts. We were pleased to hear that you are utilising apprenticeship and funded opportunities to grow and develop library staff.

Overall we recognise libraries are a very important part of their local communities and we recognise the impact they have had during the pandemic with limited resources.

### **Your Response**

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the contents of this letter but in this instance, we require no formal written response.

Yours sincerely,



**Councillor Chris Holley**

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

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