Cyngor Abertawe
Swansea Council

To/
Councillor June Burtonshaw
Cabinet Member for Better Communities (Place)

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: *Gofynnwch am:*	Overview & Scrutiny
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Date *Dyddiad:*	4th April 2019

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Better Communities (Place). The letter relates to the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report 2017/18

Dear Councillor Burtonshaw,

On the 20th March 2019 the Panel met to discuss the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report 2017/18.

The Panel are grateful to all officers who attended to provide information and answer questions.

The Panel do have some thoughts and observations to share with you.

We heard how Swansea still continues to perform well in relation to library services.

It was explained that The Welsh Public Library Standards consist of 12 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators, 10 of which have targets. Swansea Council Libraries met 11 out of 12 core entitlements in full and out of the 10 quality indicators with targets, met 7 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 2.

We heard how the 2 quality indicators which failed relate to the budget spent on up to date reading materials and Welsh language reading materials. The 1 quality indicator that was met in part relates to staffing levels and qualifications – part of this has been impacted by some qualified managers having left the service over the last couple of years, therefore reducing the qualification average, however, the service met the target for training.

We were told that we have good customer satisfaction rates and that we have met targets relating to 'sufficient' service points in communities, which is due to the spread of libraries across Swansea. This is very positive and means that people in all areas of Swansea have a library nearby.

We also heard that you are reviewing your monitoring procedures to ensure there are improved outcomes and you will continue to address any failure points in the service.

It was interesting to hear about the 4 case studies which demonstrate individual development;

1. The Crochet group at St Thomas Library
2. The Reading Stars initiative in Brynhyfryd Library
3. Learning about Shopping Online – Central Library
4. Mental Health Support Collaborative Project – Clydach Library

The Panel were encouraged by the range of activities available in libraries that encourage integration and support in a range of ways.

We heard that despite difficult financial times our libraries are performing well in relation to attendance and access. This demonstrates that people enjoy attending libraries and they are a valued part of community life. We were told that we are;

- 5th in Wales for library attendance for events
- 5th in Wales for library visits
- 5th Wales for revenue expenditure
- 8th in Wales for online access

The Panel enquired about mobile libraries and we were told that these are no longer in use but the community service delivers to people who would find accessing a library difficult.

We heard that agency staff have been used to cover sickness and deal with delays in recruitment. We were also told that some of the staff who work in libraries have contracts with a small amount of hours, and trying to juggle these hours and shift patterns across libraries can be difficult.

We were concerned that the new changes in library times would be detrimental and the beginning of chipping away at library services, however, we were assured by you that there will be no more changes to library services in the foreseeable future. We are very happy to hear this as we feel that maintaining library services is essential. We are pleased to see that the work the library services is currently undertaking is popular across a range of ages and geographical areas and that they are thriving.

This letter does not seek a response but we welcome any thoughts and observations you may have.

Yours sincerely,



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