

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:**           **CABINET**

**DATE:**                   **TUESDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2012**

**REPORT BY:**           **DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

**SUBJECT:**               **WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS**

**1.00**   **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01    To present the Council's Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report for 2011-12, and the response of the Welsh Government to the report. The Council's submission and the Welsh Government response are available in the Members' Library and on the website.

**2.00**   **BACKGROUND**

2.01    The Welsh Government introduced a fourth assessment framework for public library authorities, to operate from 2011 to 2014. It takes the form of 9 Public Library Standards, which stipulate performance levels to be achieved by March 2014, and 8 Performance Indicators, which measure the authority's performance in successive years of the framework, and its performance in relation to other library authorities in Wales. The focus of the fourth framework is the maintenance of core library services during a challenging time for the public sector.

2.02    Library authorities are required to produce an Annual Report for each year of the framework, using a template provided by Welsh Government. The report records performance against each of the Standards and Performance Indicators, with accompanying commentary to support and explain. The report for 2011 -12 is the first report in the current three year framework.

**3.00**   **CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01    Welsh Government's analysis of the report identifies and comments on those Standards which the Council meets in full, in part, and those which it does not meet. The analysis can be summarised as follows:

3.02    The Council is achieving 5 of the 9 Standards in full. This includes all the Standards relating to access to services - location of service points, access for those unable to use conventional libraries and facilities, and opening hours. (WPLS 1, 2 & 3) The standard for new acquisitions of English and Welsh stock (WPLS 5) and the standard relating to supply of requests within acceptable time periods (WPLS7) were met in full.

- 3.03 The Council is partly achieving the remaining 4 Standards. However, because there is no provision of WiFi and the use of internet on laptops, owned by users, within libraries is not permitted, the service is achieving the majority of the requirements of WPLS 4 (ICT services and facilities) but not all. WPLS 6 relates to expenditure on books and other collection items. Four sections of this standard have been met but expenditure on collection items for adults is below the lowest quartile. This reflects the spending freeze on the book fund applied in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the year to enable the Directorate to address other budget pressures.
- 3.04 The standard relating to staffing (WPLS 8) was not fully met but the Welsh Government acknowledge that two of the three requirements were met and the overall staffing levels were very close to stipulated levels.
- 3.05 WPLS 9 relates to buildings and capital investment. Space requirements were met despite closure of 3 libraries but building condition surveys so the standard was only partially met. Building condition surveys were not submitted and disability audits are required once within the 5 year period 2009-14.
- 3.06 The Welsh Government assessment of the Performance Indicators notes some improvement in performance compared to 2010-11: WPL PI 5 (percentage of total authority revenue expenditure on books and materials), WPL PI 6 (percentage of authority revenue expenditure spent on the service), WPL PI 7 (capital expenditure), WPL PI 8 (net annual revenue authority expenditure on providing a library service). However in other key areas performances have declined since 2010-11. Users (WPL PI 1), use of IT (WPL PI 3) and issues (WPL PI 4) have all decreased. The Welsh Government states that this is directly attributable to expenditure reductions and the impact on resulting service provision.
- 3.07 The assessment describes the annual Return for 2010-11 as providing some useful commentary and additional information to assist the assessment process. One of the main objectives of the Fourth Assessment Framework for library authorities in Wales (2011-14) is ensuring that the resources expended on library services are not reduced disproportionately when compared to the resources awarded to other local authority statutory services. Past Frameworks have provided evidence that in authorities that impose in-year reductions or expenditure moratoria, performances have suffered significantly as a result. The Government would wish to be assured that the authority does not impose disproportionate cuts on the library service and that the next Annual Return addresses the matter in detail. The County Council can do this through presenting library service information in a wider and comparative authority context which would have enabled the assessors to ascertain whether library expenditure reductions are commensurate with those across all services.

#### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 Cabinet is requested to consider the Welsh Public Library Standards Report for 2011-12, and note the response of the Welsh Government.

4.02 Cabinet is requested to endorse the action outlined in 5.01 to enable the Council to improve its performance against the Standards.

#### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 The financial implications of complying with the Standards continue to be assessed and will be reported to Cabinet through the budget setting process.

#### **6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 The Standards address a number of issues which relate to anti-poverty.

#### **7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 None.

#### **8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.01 The Standards encompass a number of issues which relate to equal opportunities.

#### **9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 None - this is a retrospective report recording performance during 2011-12.

#### **10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

10.01 WPLPI 2 requires the Council to measure community and user satisfaction with the service at least once during the three year framework.

#### **11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 Surveys are planned for 2013.

#### **12.00 APPENDICES**

12.01 **A.** Flintshire County Council. Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report 2011-12

**B.** Welsh Government. Fourth Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards: Annual Return 2011-12 (Flintshire)

**Copies are available in the members' Library and on the website.**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985**  
**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Welsh Government. *Maintaining a valued service and How good is your public library service?*

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/cultureandsport/museumsarchiveslibraries/cymal/libraries/wpls/wpls201114/>

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