

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	11 th August 2021
Report Author	Jane Sellwood
Service Area	Libraries
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To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Welsh Public Library Standards

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The attached documents provide the full return to Welsh Government in relation to the Welsh Public Library Standards. While the day to day management of the Library services has been given over to Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust, the responsibility for Library services remains with the Local Authority under the 1964 Libraries and Museums Act.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 The report requires ratification through a scrutiny process to be a final submission to Welsh Government, therefore the recommendations are as follows:
- 2.2 That the report is accepted and ratified as a full return

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The report is being presented to scrutiny as the local authority must have a process in place to ratify the submission made yearly to Welsh Government. Scrutiny is being asked to look at the report, challenge any issues identified and ultimately ratify it in its current form for submission to Welsh Government in line with the responsibilities held by the authority un the 1964 Libraries and Museums Act.
- 3.2 The Welsh Public Library Standards are the way in which the minister with responsibility for Library Services is able to measure whether an authority is complying with its statutory duty.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 Prior to the pandemic Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries were performing well against the extended framework and were able to complete a strong return for the year 2019-20.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 The report required to be submitted for the year 2020-21 has been changed in line with discussion with Libraries in all Wales meetings and via email exchanges with heads of service for each of the Welsh authorities. While it retains elements of the normal return, several areas have been removed and there will be no measures applied this year. Library services have been severely impacted by the pandemic and remained closed or with very limited services for the duration of 2020 and into 2021. Various restrictions and mitigations have been required in service areas up until this point in the year and beyond and therefore the service is unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels for this year.

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- 6.1 To return to a pre-pandemic level of service and rebuild customer engagement levels

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

- 7.1 Ensure all our policies and practices feed into the delivery of the service to improve the outcomes for the people of Merthyr Tydfil

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL WELLBEING GOALS

- 8.1 The new framework deals with the national wellbeing goals in the following way:

A Prosperous Wales

Development of a skilled and well educated population is a fundamental aspect of public libraries activity. Examples of how this is achieved include providing access to a world of lifelong learning through relevant book stock and online information, and the provision of free IT equipment, broadband and wi-fi, which supports education, small businesses and job seeking. Core entitlements 2, 3, 6 and 7, and quality indicators 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 15 all monitor aspects of public libraries contribution to this goal.

A Resilient Wales

Social and economic resilience is supported by encouraging and promoting individual personal development, enabling people and society to adapt to changing circumstances. Regular consultation with users ensures that the services themselves are resilient and able to adapt to changing needs. Two core entitlements are particularly pertinent here, 3 and 11, together with quality indicators 4, 11 and 14. Examples of how this is achieved in practice include support for greater community involvement in running library services and book stock that encourages a more resilient lifestyle with access to IT so people can self-educate about the issues.

A Healthier Wales

Physical and mental wellbeing is a key offer of public libraries, not only by providing information on which to base informed choices for the benefit of health in the future but also designated collections and schemes such as Book Prescription Wales titles loaned through libraries, which directly benefit individuals with health concerns. Relevant core entitlements for this goal are 3 and 4: quality indicators 1, 4 and 6 monitor activity.

A More Equal Wales

Libraries are welcoming, inclusive and offer pro-active outreach and public engagement activities in deprived and socially excluded communities. Support for Government initiatives such as Universal JobMatch and Universal Credit enable those without IT skills or facilities fulfil their potential. Core entitlements 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 and quality indicators 3, 4, 11, 13 and 14, all monitor public libraries contribution to this goal.

A Wales of Cohesive Communities

Libraries offer a safe neutral place within the community which provides opportunities for people to connect with each other. The one-stop shop or hub model being developed in many areas further connects local communities with the services they need. Other examples of support for community involvement through the process of provision of information about the local area. Core entitlements 1, 3 and 5 and quality indicators 1, 6, 13 and 16 monitor aspects of public libraries contribution of this goal.

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

With explicit provision in the current framework covering the provision of material in the Welsh Language, libraries are well placed to contribute in this area. They promote and protect Welsh Culture and language, and encourage participation in the arts and recreation through the availability of a good range of stock in Welsh, and a host of cultural events and activities. Core entitlements include 2, 3, 6, 8, 9 and 10 and quality indicators 2, 6, 8, 9 and 10 are particularly relevant here.

A Globally Responsible Wales

A commitment to make the most efficient use of resources is embodied in the quality indicators. MALD works with the British Standards Institute and International Standards Organisation in developing and using quality indicators for Libraries that conform to ISO 11620. Further the borrowing of books is a great recycling tool, reducing the impact on the environment. Libraries in Wales work together in book purchasing consortia, digital e-book consortia and the All Wales Library Management system. Core entitlement 12 is directly related to global good practice, while quality indicators 14 and 15 are related to the balance and efficiency of service provision.

JANE SELLWOOD

WELLBEING OPERATIONS MANAGER

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		