
RECORD OF DECISION BY CABINET MEMBER

Decision taken by:

Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture & Heritage

Date of Decision:

28 September 2022

Date of publication of decision:

28 September 2022

Decision:

ABOLITION OF PUNITIVE FINES FOR LATE RETURN OF BORROWED BOOKS AND OTHER ITEMS.

To abolish library overdue fines charged on the late return of borrowed books and other items.

Purpose of Decision:

The decision will remove a significant remaining perceived barrier to library use – punitive overdue fines charged on the late return of borrowed books and other items.

Reasons for Decision:

The Denbighshire Library Strategy 2019-2022 includes the intention to “seek opportunities to reduce any real or perceived barriers which prevent people from accessing and using their local library”. Library overdue fines are widely regarded as significant barriers to library use – the experience or fear of incurring fines leads to people not joining or returning to use library services. Fines, and the fear of accruing fines, exclude people from using and benefitting from the library’s services, impacting their access to resources and facilities to support their literacy, learning, skills and wellbeing. Fines disproportionately impact people on lower incomes, and penalise people who borrow physical books (there are no penalties relating to digital borrowing of e-resources). In common with all libraries across Wales, Denbighshire has not charged overdue fines to children and young people for many years. The abolishing of fines for adults would provide equity for all library members. In Wales 4 authorities have already abolished fines and a further 5 are known to proposing to abolish in the coming year.

When libraries were required to close due to the Covid-19 pandemic in March

2020, the system was adjusted so that no customer was charged overdue fines. The decision to abolish fines would mean that they would not be re-introduced. Libraries are well placed to support people during the current cost of living crisis and in the post-pandemic recovery, and to help tackle poverty and inequalities.

Interests Declared:

No interest to declare

Consultation:

The mandatory delegated decision officer group, the lead member and the service officers were consulted on the report accompanying this decision.

Authority for delegation of the decision to the Cabinet Member:

See Scheme of Delegation.