

Denbighshire Library Service 2015-2016

1. CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS WIDER WELSH GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES 2015-16

Please provide a narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals (indicative length: 500 - 1,000 words).

1.1 Improving public services

In 2014, Denbighshire's Senior Leadership Team consulted on the possibilities of developing the Authority's libraries as community based assets. Hand in hand with the corporate efficiency agenda, this led to a **Library Modernisation Programme** which considered the future of the service in the context of the Council's financial pressures. In consequence, a Council restructure, commencing in March 2015, saw the merger of the Library Service and One Stop Shops with the Customer Services and Cashiers team, with the specific aim of meeting the increasing expectations of customers and of transforming both services to deliver the digital agenda, whilst also reducing overall costs.

By November 2015 the **service-wide restructure** had resulted in a significant change in staff numbers, staff responsibilities and staff expenditure. All front-line posts transformed from Grade 3 Library Assistants to Grade 5 Customer Service Assistants with responsibilities for dealing with a range of Council enquiries, promoting digital self-service and channel shift, and the handling of cash and financial transactions, in addition to delivering a statutory Library Service. Despite some voluntary redundancies and reductions to staff contract hours, and a 7% reduction to opening hours, the principal focus was to ensure the continued presence and development of all libraries as **Community Hubs**.

Coinciding with the restructure was the refurbishment and transformation of Rhyl Library as a Community Hub. The model brings a number of council services together under one roof, and is an example of services working together for the benefit of the community. The Deputy Minister (Ken Skates) visited the new One Stop Shop in early November, and subsequently released the following Written Statement

"I am committed to our public libraries being welcoming community hubs which deliver a range of digital, literacy and cultural services, as well as providing access to other services."

The new range of services delivered from Rhyl includes:

- Dedicated council tax and housing benefit officers working from the library
- Regular advice surgeries, eg Talking Points, CAB, North Wales Police
- New payment kiosks replacing the previous Cash Office facility (previously at the Town Hall)

- Dedicated Council Information points
- 1-2-1 Consultation rooms
- Hot-desking facilities for Council staff, and corporate Wifi
- Meet and greet / reception desk to direct customers to the most appropriate area of the building

1.2 Digital inclusion

Staff across all 8 libraries support and enable users of all ages to become digitally connected, whether by accessing online digital resources, searching for information, setting up email addresses, downloading e-books and e-zines, or logging on to a range of Government information and web portals such as Universal Credit and Job Seeker's Allowance. Denbighshire provides 99 free public access computers across its 8 libraries, with 6 locations also providing free Wifi to allow ease of access by a range of digital devices. Staff also guide and encourage users to self-serve facilities at appropriate libraries, whether it be council payments, such as parking fines or the collection of green bins, or whether it be book issues, returns or renewals.

1.3 Community health and well being

A recent example of the Library Service working in partnership to address the health and well being of its communities is the regular Talking Point sessions which takes place at numerous library locations across the county. A Talking Point session is an opportunity for Denbighshire residents to meet health and social care staff from various partner organisations – for information and advice - and to talk face to face about the well-being outcomes they want for themselves or for others. Talking Points provide a pathway between adult social care services offered over the telephone and the more formal social care assessments that happen in a person's own home. Residents are encouraged to come along and explain what they feel is missing in their local community that could make a difference to their health and well-being and they can also get involved and share their knowledge, skills and experiences to improve the well-being of others in their community.

1.4 Tackling poverty / Education and Literacy

Flying Start is the Welsh Government's targeted Early Years programme for families with children under 4 years of age in some of the most deprived areas of Wales, and is one of the Welsh Government's top priorities. Bookstart in Denbighshire operates two strands:

- Firstly, the universal Wales-wide book gifting scheme in which all children receive book packs at 18 months and 2 years old (funded by Welsh Government via Booktrust Cymru)
- And secondly - a programme of rhymetimes to develop children's language and cognitive skills and parents' confidence as their child's first educators (funded in Denbighshire by Flying Start)

Rhymetimes focus on giving parents confidence to support their child's early language and learning development. Songs, rhymes and stories in Welsh and English are introduced in a shared group environment where children also learn key socialisation skills. Cultural

diversity is celebrated and children with disabilities or behavioural issues are included. Parents build up a social network and discover the range of services available to support them.