

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	25 January 2024
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Emrys Wynne, Lead Member for the Welsh Language, Culture and Heritage/Liz Grieve, Head of Housing and Communities
Head of Service	Liz Grieve, Head of Housing and Communities
Report author	Deborah Owen, Principal Librarian
Title	Library Service Standards and Performance

1. What is the report about?

1.1. The report highlights the Library Service's performance against National Standards

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To provide information regarding the Council's performance in relation to the 6th Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-20 (extended for 21-23) and the progress made in developing libraries as places of individual and community well-being and resilience.

2.2. It should be noted that this report relates to Denbighshire's Library Service for the financial year 2022-23. The impact on performance of proposed changes to the Library/One Stop Shop service is not expected to be manifest until April 2024 at the earliest.

2.3. New National Standards are expected to be established with the publication of the 7th Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards, which has a provisional implementation date of 1st April 2025.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Committee considers and comments on the performance against the 6th Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards and considers requesting a progress report in January 2025.

4. Report details

4.1. Welsh Public Library Standards

- 4.2. Library authorities in Wales have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to deliver a 'comprehensive and efficient' service to its residents. The Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards enables Welsh Government Culture Division (WGCD) to measure and assess how authorities are fulfilling their statutory duties.

- 4.3. Library Services submit an Annual Report, noting performance for the previous financial year, to which WGCD responds with an Annual Assessment Report. The most recent Annual Assessment Report covers 2022-23 and performance against the full 6th Framework 2017-20 (extended to 2023), and consists of 12 Core Entitlements and 10 Quality Indicators with specific targets. The report is attached as Appendix A.

- 4.4. Denbighshire continues to meet all 12 Core Entitlements. Of the 10 quality indicators (QI) which have targets, Denbighshire is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part. Please see page 2 of the Annual Assessment Report in Appendix A.

- 4.5. QI 3 Support for individual development. Met in full.

- 4.6. QI 4: Support for health and wellbeing. Met in full.

Talking Points returned fully to all libraries in 22-23, providing a face-to-face opportunity for people to have a conversation about maintaining an independent life and accessing local support and activities. It is a social prescribing approach and delivered via a partnership between Adult Social Care, the third sector and libraries. Libraries are embedded in the authority's Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly strategies and action plans. The recent survey of Bookstart parents

demonstrated the significant positive impact attending rhyme times in libraries has on parental mental health including recovery from post-natal depression.

4.7. QI 6: All static service points offer events / activities for users with special requirements. Met in full.

There were a total of 22,133 attendances at events and activities in libraries. This includes reading groups, children's activities, author events and a range of social engagement groups to reduce isolation and loneliness. 55% of the figure are attendances at our Bookstart Rhymetimes.

4.8. QI 7: Location of service points. Met in full.

4.9. QI 9: Up to date and appropriate reading material. Met in full.

23,973 items were acquired in 22-23. This includes the individual titles made available via subscriptions to two digital download sites Press Reader (newspapers) and Overdrive (magazines) - a total of 11,315 titles. The total physical books and audiobook items was 11,791. The Report noted that Denbighshire shows a strong commitment to children's provision, with 25% of its materials being spent on children's resources.

4.10. QI 10: Welsh Language Resources. Met in full.

71% of issues of Welsh language material were for children's books - with only 2 bookshops in the county, the local library is the main source of Welsh language books for children. This figure also reflects the high participation in the Summer Reading Challenge annually. Denbighshire is in the top quartile of library authorities for the proportion of the materials budget devoted to Welsh language resources and it is above the median for Welsh language issues per capita Welsh speakers.

4.10.1. QI 11: Online Access. Met in full.

Usage of the public access ICT is at a much lower level than pre-Covid, reflecting the general trend of people having their own devices. Following Covid networked solo digital laptops were introduced in every library for customers to use for private online meetings and consultations. The new cloud printing facility means

users can bypass the public PCs to release their printing via the self-service kiosk or via staff. This will also have contributed to the lower use figure.

4.10.2. QI 12: Supply of Requests. Partially met.

Our internal delivery system was reduced from 5 to 3 days in 2021 due to budget pressures, combined with not all the libraries being open every day this means that it takes slightly longer to supply requested items. 51% of items are supplied within 7 days, but 80% are supplied within 15 calendar days.

4.10.3. QI 13: Staffing levels and qualifications. Partially met.

There has been no change in overall staffing levels but Denbighshire does not meet the targets for overall staffing or qualified staff per capita. However, it is worth noting that the fact that most libraries in the service are one stop shops, and the majority of frontline, supervisory and managerial staff spend approx. 50% of their time on their Customer Services roles therefore only 50% of the staffing level is reported as library provision.

4.11. QI 16: Opening Hours Per Capita. Met in full.

Opening hours have returned to pre-Covid levels, with the exception of a reduction of half a day each at Ruthin and Denbigh libraries.

4.12. Authorities were also required to submit a narrative report including an impact to demonstrate the library has had on an individual, a commentary on the service's contribution to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals, and to reflect on the future direction and plans for the library service. The narrative report for Denbighshire is attached as Appendix B.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. The Library Service is a statutory responsibility of the Authority and its services contribute to a number of corporate objectives and themes, including a healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire; a learning and growing Denbighshire; a better connected Denbighshire; a fairer, safe and more equal Denbighshire; a Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and a well run high performing council.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1. There are no financial proposals associated with this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A Well-Being Impact Assessment has not been undertaken, as this is a performance report for information. But the 6th Framework of Library Standards demonstrates how libraries have a clear contribution to make to the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1 Performance Scrutiny Committee in March 2023 considered the Welsh Government's Assessment of the Library Service's performance for 2021-22. There have been no further consultations regarding this particular report.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. As this is a report on historical performance there are no financial implications to this report There are no direct financial implications of this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. As this is a report on historical performance, there are no risks associated with this report.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000

11.2. Section 7.4.2(b) of the Council's Constitution stipulates that scrutiny may 'review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy, objectives, performance targets and / or particular service areas'.