

Report To: Performance Scrutiny Committee

Report Author: Lead Officer: Libraries, Archives & Arts
(Communications Marketing and Leisure)

Report Title: Library Service Standards: Annual Report 2011-12

1. What is the report about?

The report outlines the Library Service's 2011/12 performance against CyMAL's Annual Assessment Framework for Welsh Public Library Authorities.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To inform the Committee of the Library Service's 2011/12 performance against the 9 Welsh Public Library Standards and 7 Welsh Public Library Performance Indicators.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Scrutiny Members:

- 3.1 consider the report and the comments relating to the Library Service's performance against the Annual Assessment Framework,
- 3.2 provide a statement to CyMAL concerning the Library Service's performance, and
- 3.3 determine whether any further scrutiny is required

4. Report details

CyMAL's Annual Assessment Framework for Welsh Public Libraries

5. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 sets out the statutory duty of public library authorities to "provide a comprehensive and efficient library service" and makes it a duty of the Welsh Ministers to "superintend and promote the improvement" of public library services in Wales. In accordance with these statutory requirements the Welsh Government annually assesses the Library Service's Annual Return to CyMAL (Museums Archives and Libraries Wales) which focuses on performance against 9 Standards and 7 Performance Indicators.
6. The Framework is operational for a three-year period from April 2011 to March 2014, and focuses on the maintenance of a core library services in what is recognised as a challenging period for the public sector.

Library Standards

7. CyMAL's assessment of Denbighshire's Annual Report confirms that in 2011-12 the authority:
 - met 5 of the 9 Welsh Public Library Standards
 - partly achieved 3 of the Standards
 - and failed to meet one Standard

The average number of Standards met by Welsh public library authorities was 6, the highest number achieved was 8, and the lowest 3. Denbighshire's performance (5 out of 9 Standards) was considered by CyMAL to be "slightly below average when compared with other authorities in Wales."

Standards Met

8. The five Standards met by the authority were:
 - Location and accessibility of libraries within their communities
 - Access to services for user groups with particular access requirements (e.g: disabled access, housebound library service, accessible IT)
 - Accessibility of opening hours
 - Annual acquisition levels of stock for adults and for children
 - Satisfaction of user requests and reservations

Standards Partly Met

9. Some Standards have multiple sub-sections, and a partial achievement is recognised when an authority is achieving at least half of the multiple requirements. Denbighshire partly met 3 of the Standards:
 - **ICT facilities and services.** 14 of the 15 requirements within this Standard are already being met (eg the number of public access computers, scanning and printing facilities, plug-in facilities for digital media devices, and online information sources such as newspapers, family history and reference materials.) The only outstanding element is the provision of WiFi at those libraries open for 30 hours or more per week. Denbighshire has 6 libraries which fall into this category, but WIFI is only currently available at Rhyl Library.
 - **Expenditure on books and other materials.** This particular Standard is in two parts, with a separate expenditure target set for Children and Adult stock. Although Denbighshire's combined expenditure (at £2,055 per 1,000 population) was above the minimum standard of £1,948, Denbighshire's own stock priorities for 2011/12 resulted in a top quartile spend on resources for those

under 16, and an expenditure which fell below the minimum level for adults. As a result, the Standard was deemed to be partially met. Oddly enough, this seems to conflict with the Standard on Stock Acquisitions (see 8 above) where Denbighshire actually met the minimum number of stock purchases required for both adults and children, which suggests that CyMAL's correlation between the two is somehow out of sync.

- Expenditure on, and management of library buildings. CyMAL acknowledged Denbighshire's expenditure on the care and maintenance of its library buildings, but indicated that this Standard cannot be met if an Asset / Condition Survey has not been undertaken since 2006.

Standards Not Met

10. Denbighshire is one of 8 authorities not meeting the Standard relating to staffing levels. 4 full-time professional posts have been deleted from the structure since 1 April 2008 to address the efficiency agenda, and CyMAL have accepted that there are no plans to increase the staffing levels. (The Standard is met by 6 authorities, and is partly met by another 8.)
 - Staffing levels shall not fall below 0.37 staff per 1,000 population (Denbighshire = 0.35)
 - At least 23% of staff shall be formally qualified in library and information studies (Denbighshire = 19%)

Performance Indicators

11. CyMAL points out that Denbighshire is meeting 5 of the 9 Standards, when in fact the Welsh average is 6, and indeed the highest number achieved was 8. The implication is clear – that Denbighshire's Library Service is below average.
12. However, the suite of Performance Indicators tells a very different story.
 - 2nd highest used / visited Library Service across Wales, with 7,864 users per 1,000 population. (second only to Cardiff.) The indicator includes physical visits to libraries, virtual visits to the Library Service's website, and attendance at events and activities organised by the service (eg Children's Book Week, author visits, book promotions, etc). The Welsh average is 5,884.
 - 3rd highest authority in Wales for issues of books and other materials, with 6,021 issues per 1,000 population. The Welsh average is 4,823 issues.

- 17th for percentage of the Library Service's revenue budget spent on stock. Whilst this places us in the lower quartile for expenditure on stock, the high issue figure quoted above shows that the money is effectively spent, and that we must be meeting customer requirements. This is also confirmed by the high footfall.
 - 12th for percentage take up of public access PCs. With approximately 100 PCs across the 8 libraries, for 40% of the time, these were in active use throughout 2011/12. Usage varies from library to library, with a higher demand at Rhyl than elsewhere, although all libraries seem to approach the 100% take up after 3.30pm on school days.
13. Denbighshire's high usage and issue figures for 2011-12 reflects the success of its Summer Reading Challenge, which was the most successful ever in Denbighshire with 4,859 children participating – the highest ever and a 29% increase on 2010-11 [3,758]. This was again the highest participation figure in Wales (the Wales average is 1,830). 13.2% of the children participating in Wales were from Denbighshire.
- 68% completed – highest in Wales
 - 13.7% increase in the number of books borrowed
 - 56% of primary age children took part
 - 48% were boys – highest in Wales
14. Denbighshire is 4th for its net expenditure per 1,000 population on Library Services, although this demonstrates the Authority's investment in delivering shared and multi services from its library locations (5 One Stop Shops, 1 Museum, 4 Art Galleries, 1 Countryside office, and 1 Tourist Information Centre) with all the energy, caretaking, cleaning, National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) and associated costs paid for by the Library Service. Work has begun on cleansing the financial data to accurately reflect the true costs of the Library Service, and this will continue throughout 2012-13.
15. On the other hand, Denbighshire is in 20th position with a cost of £2.29 per visit/usage, compared with the Welsh average of £2.84, and the Welsh highest of £4.24.
16. Performance Indicator data for all Welsh authorities can be seen in Appendix A. In moving forward, we will contact other high performing Library Services within Wales to share best practice and to learn from their experience.
- 17. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

The Library Service contributes to the health and wellbeing of local communities by providing access to books and information, and partnership activities for all ages. It also contributes to Denbighshire's Literacy Strategy, as acknowledged in the Estyn Self Assessment report.

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

There are no cost implications.

19. What consultations have been carried out?

CyMAL's assessment has been discussed with Lead Member for Tourism, Leisure and Youth, at the Communications, Marketing and Leisure (CML) Lead Officer's Group and at the Library Service Management Team.

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

Performance against the Assessment Framework for 2011-14 is reported annually to CyMAL. Whilst the most recent evaluation from CyMAL indicates that Denbighshire is underperforming in meeting 5 of the 9 Standards, it is apparent from the Performance Indicators that Denbighshire is one of the best performing in terms of library visits, usage and issues. As such, there are no risks involved with the current assessment, and the service is confident it is addressing its own priorities in meeting the needs of local residents and communities within Denbighshire.

21. Power to make the Decision

Article 6.3.4(b) of the Council's Constitution.

Contact Officer:

Lead Officer: Libraries, Archives and Arts

Tel: 01824 708203