

Appendix 3

**More than Books:**

**Library and Information Service Strategy:**

**2017- 2020**

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**Cyngor Gwynedd Council**

## **1. Introduction**

Gwynedd Council has been reviewing its Library Service across the county during 2013-14. This Review has brought together the views of users, councillors, staff and partners. The review came to the conclusion that it would be unsustainable to continue with the service in its current form; and that the Service requires a clear direction in planning for the future and responding to the challenges of digital developments and budgetary restrictions.

Following the review a consultation document called “More Than Books” outlined a strategy including a vision, aims and priorities for the Gwynedd Library Service for the future. The public consultation was conducted during Spring / Summer 2015 in order to measure the impact of any possible changes; and to offer local people an opportunity to share their opinions with us before any final decisions are made.

The public consultation took place during a period when the Council faced extreme financial challenges. Gwynedd Council, like all other councils in Wales, faces huge cuts in the funding that it receives from the government to pay for local services. This means that there will be far less funding available to pay for local services in future years.

The combination of huge cuts in budgets and a substantial increase in demand for public services means that Gwynedd Council faces a shortfall in its finances which increases each year. This means that Gwynedd Council must find new and creative approaches towards the delivery of local services as the funding decreases.

## **2. What does the Library Service do?**

Providing a ‘comprehensive and efficient library service’ that encourages both adults and children to make full use of the library services is a statutory requirement under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Public libraries have evolved considerably over the past half century. By now Public Libraries offer a wide range of services, such as:-

- Loan of books and e-books
- Loan of DVDs and Computer Games
- Loan of Talking Books CDs and online Talking Books
- Use of newspapers and magazines, including online access
- Use of computers and free access to the internet and e-mail
- Use of office software, scanning and printing facilities
- Free Wi-Fi access to use your own devices
- Online access to high quality information resources
- Information Technology induction sessions and informal support
- Assistance for people seeking information, including job-seekers
- Events and activities
- Story-telling, singing and rhyme singing sessions

- Health and well-being reading groups
- Author visits and literary lectures
- Summer Reading Challenge for primary-age children
- Community rooms available for use
- Access to academic research papers
- 'Drop-in Introduction' to lifelong learning resources

During 2014-15

- Gwynedd libraries received over 375,000 visits,
- over 630,000 items were borrowed
- over 115,000 sessions on the public computers,
- over 12,500 sessions on Digital Gwynedd WiFi were provided.

In our most recent user questionnaire in 2013, 95% of adults were of the opinion that the services were good or very good, and 92% of children stated that their library was 'good'

Gwynedd's Library provision currently includes 17 libraries and 4 mobile libraries - including a Home Library service and a mobile library for children and schools. .

### **Static Libraries.**

The Library Service has 17 static libraries as part of its network. The libraries that open for more than 20 hours per week are considered as the main libraries, which are located in Barmouth, Bala, Bangor, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Caernarfon, Dolgellau, Porthmadog, Pwllheli and Tywyn.

In addition to the main libraries, the Service has 8 libraries that open for fewer than 20 hours per week, located in Bethesda, Cricieth, Deiniolen, Harlech, Llanberis, Nefyn, Penygroes and Penrhyndeudraeth.

### **Mobile Libraries**

The four Mobile Library vehicles contain approximately 2,000 Welsh and English items, including novels and factual titles for adults; children and young people's books; books for babies and nursery-age children; talking books and large print books. Stock is changed regularly and the purchase of new titles is scheduled throughout the year in order to give as much variety as possible and a wide range of titles to choose from.

Users of the Mobile Libraries are given access to the wide choice within the Library Service by means of the free requests system, whereby library staff can get hold of a copy of a book, talking book, DVD etc., upon request, from one of the other libraries, and deliver it to the reader on the mobile library's next visit. Library staff can also deal with enquiries for general information (even if it means contacting the user by phone later). Every vehicle has lift access for disabled users.

There are currently approximately 150 Mobile Library stops, with one visit per month.

The latest mobile library timetable is available on the Library Service's website

<https://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/cy/Trigolion/Llyfrgelloedd-ac-archifau/Llyfrgell-deithiol-a-gwasanaeth-ir-cartref.aspx>

### **Home Library**

We offer a library service to people's homes, in cases where a person: suffers from mobility problems; cannot carry items; suffers from a long term illness; lives far away from a library service point (static or mobile); is a full-time carer. Members receive a monthly visit, providing them with a supply of items in accordance with their agreed user profile. A special service has been arranged through the RNIB and local Blind Association for users with significant visual impairments.

The home library service is provided to approximately 300 people each year.

### **Mobile Library for School Children**

The Mobile Library - Lori Ni – visits each school at least twice a year, giving each child an opportunity to borrow primarily leisure reading resources. Items are selected for 3-11 year old pupils, and are chosen in consultation with children, supporting their literacy and enjoyment of reading.

A wide range of special materials are offered - Group Reading packs; Author Boxes; Audio Visual Materials; Story Sacks, Helping Hand Books which are a collection of story books for children which deal with special circumstances such as behaviour or emotional issues, e.g. loneliness, worry, and also personal and family matters e.g. grief and bereavement, fostering, separation etc.

Each of the 97 primary schools in Gwynedd receives a visit each term.

### **3. How does the Library Service in Gwynedd perform currently?**

#### ***3.1 Meeting Customer Needs***

The performance of libraries is assessed annually against the Welsh Public Library Standards. This assessment partly assesses whether a local authority meets the needs of its customers as defined by the standards.

The Welsh Government in its 2012/13 assessment of Gwynedd Council's Library Service, stated that the low staffing levels, compared to that of the Welsh average, might impact upon the authority's ability to provide a comprehensive service. Following this assessment Gwynedd Council undertook a full review of its Library Service.

The Review was completed during 2012-14 and identified the following:

- Gwynedd Libraries were performing better than the national average
- User satisfaction levels with the service were high;
- Awareness of the book loan and reading service was high, but awareness of the online services was generally low;
- The number of visits to Gwynedd's libraries was lower than the national average;
- The staffing level of the service was the lowest in Gwynedd, and was a threat to the sustainability of the service;

The main findings of the review were that it would be unsustainable to continue with the service in its current form; and that there is a need for a clear direction for the Service in planning for the future and responding to the challenges of digital developments and budgetary restrictions.

The latest assessment for the 2014-15 period continues to note that "Continued problems of low staffing levels are stated. In comparison to previous years' strong performance, this year's performance indicates that the Service is in a fragile state".

Further information on the Standards Framework is available on CyMAL's website:

<http://cymru.gov.uk/topics/cultureandsport/museumsarchiveslibraries/cymal/libraries/wpls/libraries-making-a-difference/?lang=cy>

#### ***3.2 The Library Service Budget.***

As stated in the introduction local authorities are in a challenging financial period. Whilst developing and planning the Library Service for the future, the strategy will need to be achieved within the budget available.

Over the last few years the Library Service has reviewed its arrangements and the following financial savings have been realised:-

2011-12	Rationalisation of Cleaning Costs and Audio-visual material	£15,000
2012-13	Review of the Mobile Library Service	£32,000
2013-14	Restructuring of the Service's Management Team	£33,000
2014-15	Late Notices Arrangements	£4,000
2014-15	Emphasis on paperback book and e-book purchases	£11,000
2015-16	North Wales Libraries Computer System	£20,000
2015-16	Regional Collaboration Arrangements for the Bibliographic Unit	£10,000

The Library Service continues to face financial constraints and it is expected for the Service to achieve efficiency savings of £103,000 by March 2018.

The Library Service will also see a cut of 25% (£65,000) to its budget for buying stock and resources during 2016-17.

This Strategy will respond to this financial context, and will design and deliver a Service within the resources available.

#### **4. Gwynedd Library Service for the future.**

##### **4.1 The vision for the future – “Gwynedd’s Libraries – More than Books”**

The Service’s vision is to ‘Improve the quality of life for Gwynedd’s residents by delivering a comprehensive and effective library service’. The core aims are to

5. Promote reading and access to printed and digital material for educational, leisure, health and well-being purposes
6. Provide and refer residents to information and reading resources of the highest quality
7. Promote the use of the service’s resources and libraries as multifunctional community centres

This vision will focus on 4 key service areas:-

##### **Developing Digital Skills**

Libraries have a role in supporting people to develop digital skills; to support them in accessing online information and services, including the virtual library service. Libraries have a role in promoting digital inclusion for Gwynedd’s residents. The digital offering will include:

- 24/7 access to library services to manage an account, retain and renew items remotely, and to search through an online catalogue;
- the ability for users to join online and make contact online / by e-mail / facebook / twitter
- Provide free internet access
- Develop the use of, and access to mobile technology (tablets, laptops);
- Provide activities and campaigns to develop digital skills and inclusion among residents (e.g. Taster courses; basic IT sessions)

##### **Access to Information**

Libraries have a role in supporting people to gain access to online information and services in the fields that are essential to life, such as careers, jobs, health, financial and benefits information. Assisting people in using information is central to the offering, through:

- Assisting people to gain access to online information and services
- Advising people on finding information;

- Acting as an 'Information Portal' bringing public and government information within the reach of local residents;

### **Promoting Health and Well-being**

Libraries have a central role in supporting people to live healthily and to promote the well-being of individuals. This offering will include:

- Books on Prescription for Adults and Families
- Home Library Service for vulnerable people
- Supported online access and public health promotion activities
- Macmillan Information Scheme and Health and Well-being Advice (including Cancer and Long-term Illness)

### **Promoting Reading**

Libraries have a duty to ensure free access to reading material and to promote reading among children, young people and adults. This offering will include:-

- Offering free books (printed and digital) and reading material
- Offering a community space to discuss and read books
- Providing access to online books and magazines
- Providing services to target audiences such as children and their families, blind and partially sighted people.

## **4.2 How will we deliver the Library Service to achieve this vision and aims?**

Public opinion was gathered from the "More Than Books" consultation, in order to measure the impact of any potential change; together with providing an opportunity for local people to share their views and ideas with us before any final decisions are determined. An initial Equalities Impact Assessment has been reviewed following the consultation and this feedback will contribute to the final impact assessment before making a decision.

The Library Service has categorized the type of provision / library that the authority would recommend as the best way of meeting the needs of residents and users of the service, and to meet the statutory expectations. The categories have also taken account of the following:

- Population and demographic patterns
- Usage pattern of the current members and distance from libraries.
- Performance trends e.g. number of visits, borrowing per hour.



- Equalities Considerations e.g. age groups 0-14 and those over 65 / Language
- Deprivation and access to public transport.

The categories have been compiled from good practice, and have considered recommendations from the Welsh Government in their latest report on the future of public library services in Wales 'Scoping a New Public Library Service for Wales'

This strategy recommends moving to a pattern of provision that is based on:

**A. Area Library** - population over 5,000 within a 3 mile catchment or within a quarter of an hour public transport journey.

**B. Authority-led Community Library** - population between 2,000 – 5,000 within a 3 mile catchment or within a quarter of an hour public transport journey.

**C. Mobile Services** - to communities serving less than 1000 population; to the home for disabled users and their carers, and to every school.

**D. Community Link or Access Point.** – Population between 1000-2000, within a 3 mile catchment (not overlapping with any other library provision).

Using clear criteria for the categories this strategy recommends establishing nine Catchment Libraries in Bangor, Caernarfon, Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Dolgellau, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Tywyn, Barmouth and Bala, four Community Libraries in Bethesda, Penygroes, Nefyn Criccieth and maintaining the Mobile Services as the most comprehensive and efficient way to provide a Library Service in Gwynedd within the budget available.

This strategy would lead to implementing changes across the library network. We would rationalize and reduce opening hours within the catchment libraries, rationalise opening hours across the community libraries, and review the locations of Mobile Service.

Using this categorisation also identifies locations in which the Library Service cannot continue to maintain the provision as it currently is. We propose that the existing provision of providing a library service from a building comes to an end in four communities, but due to the likely social impact of this, a 'Community Link / Access Point' category is proposed in order to mitigate the impact on the community and in order to maintain access to the service for the residents of that community via alternative methods.

This strategy would ensure a core library service that has the capacity to respond to the challenges of the digital age. The authority has a statutory duty to promote the public library service – this strategy intends to implement a marketing plan to promote its libraries and what they have available and also undertake specific marketing initiatives to increase membership and use.

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