

“More than Books”:

Library and Information Service Strategy:

2016- 2020

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

3. Gwynedd Council Library Service.

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. .

During 2015-16

- Gwynedd libraries received over 375,000 visits,
- over 570,000 items were borrowed
- over 100,000 sessions on the public computers,
- over 80,000 sessions on Digital Gwynedd WiFi were provided.

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 latest assessment for the 2014-15 period states that

Gwynedd had fully achieved 16 of the 18 core rights and had achieved two partly. Of the seven quality indicators with targets, Gwynedd had achieved two in full and five partly. *"Despite very strong performances in the past, Gwynedd has failed some of its targets against the new framework by a small margin.... this year. The authority manages to ensure good use of its traditional services. However, future changes could detrimentally affect the service which currently performs well, despite the staffing levels which remain low...."*

"Continued problems of low staffing levels are stated once more. In comparison to previous years' strong performance, this year's performance indicates that the Service is in a fragile state".

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'. The next survey for adults will be conducted during the Autumn of 2016, and the children and young people survey during March 2017.

Over the last few years the Library Service has achieved financial savings in order to respond to the financial constraints faced by the Council. The Library Service is

facing more financial constraints in future, specifically the need to find more savings as part of the Council's Financial Strategy for 2014-2015 to 2017-2018.

The Library Service has also seen a cut of 25% (£65,000) in its budget to purchase books and resources during 2016-17. This has meant that the authority spends less than what is expected by the current National Standard.

When considering the future, the Library Service need to be ready to respond to the challenges of digital developments, the challenge of people changing their reading habits and information seeking methods, and to the financial challenges.

Therefore, the purpose of this Strategy is to set a direction for the Library Service and arrange ourselves in a much more effective and efficient way in order to respond to these challenges and to meet the needs of Gwynedd residents within the resources available.

4. 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

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

This vision will focus on 5 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 web 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 Individual and Community Health and Well-being

Libraries have a central role in supporting people to live healthily and to promote the well-being of individuals. Libraries contribute towards the promotion of community cohesion, mental health well-being, social inclusion and the Welsh language. This offering will include:

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

Promoting Reading

Libraries have a duty to ensure free access to reading material and to promote reading among children, young people and adults. The service contributes towards raising literacy levels among children and young people by offering free access to printed resources and e-books. 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
- Support the –Every Child a Library Member campaign.
- Providing services to target audiences such as children and their families, blind and partially sighted people.

Learning

Libraries aim to develop and promote their role and contribution to lifelong learning so that children and families and adults can build their confidence and their creative and digital skills. This offering aims to provide more opportunities to learn in a variety

of subjects, and specifically to assist the pathway of basic literacy to fluency. The Service already offers:

- Story-telling and rhyme singing provision for young children and their parents
- Holds workshops and activities aimed at children and families
- Refers people to lifelong learning activities in libraries and in the community
- Offers informal learning opportunities in the library, especially in the digital technology field

5. How will we deliver the Library Service to achieve this vision?

Following the consultation on this strategy and the assessment of its potential impact this Strategy categorizes' s the type of provision / library that the Library Service wishes to deliver across the authority. This categorization responds to resident and user expectations of the service, in addition to responding to the statutory requirements. 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 outlines how the Library Service will be moving to a pattern of provision that is based on:

A. Area Library

B. Authority led Community Managed Library

C. Mobile Services

The Following table describes the provision according to its category:-

Category :	The facilities available:-
<p>Area Library</p> <p>More than 20,000 annual visits</p> <p>More than 25,000 items borrowed annually</p> <p>More than 5,000 computer sessions</p> <p>Cost per head (library user) less than £2.00 on average</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve a population of over 5,000 within a 3 mile catchment or fifteen minutes of travel by public transport • The library is located in the main shopping area within the catchment • Opening hours - at least 20 hours to at least 40 hours in the larger centres • Floor area - at least 150m² for a library that serves a population of less than 20,000 and at least 300m² for a library that serves over 20,000 • At least 10,000 items of stock in a wide variety of formats, with between 10,000 and 15,000 items of stock in the larger libraries. • Link to e-government and e-learning and provision of specialist collections, e.g. - Local History, Health and Welfare, sets of books for Reading Groups, • At least 8 computers available to the public with at least 16 computers in the larger libraries • Free Wi-Fi service and space to use personal lap-tops and tablets • Self Service points • Activity space within the Children's Section, or access to the appropriate space • Space, or access to a space, for holding Community and artistic events • Continuous consideration to co-locating with other similar services or partner
<p>Community Library</p> <p>More than 10,000 annual visits</p> <p>More than 15,000 items borrowed annually</p> <p>More than 1,500 computer sessions</p> <p>Cost per library user less than £3.00 on average</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve a population of between 2,000 and 5,000 within 3 miles • The library is located near the centre of town / village or in / adjacent to a community centre / school • Opening hours: minimum 15 hours • Floor area - at least 75m² • At least 5,000 items of stock • At least 6 computers available to the Public • Free Wi-Fi Service • A variety of sources of paper and online information • Element of self-service depending on local needs and any other use of the community site. • Space for community meetings or events where possible • Co-located with partner either from another Service within the council or within the Community • Use of volunteers for additional activities only

<p>Mobile Library</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community - Home - Children and Young People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves a population of between 200 and 1000 within a quarter of a mile's walking distance. • Duration of each stop – between a quarter and three quarters of an hour. • Locations are chosen based on previous use, the distance to a library building, access to public transport and health and safety considerations. • Monthly Visits • The Home Service is offered to those who are disabled and/or unable to leave their homes. • Monthly visits. • One Children and Young People Mobile Vehicle (Lori Ni) for the whole authority • Every primary school will be visited by the mobile Vehicle for borrowing books and all secondary schools will be provided with the young people's information service. • Duration of visit in each school is based on pupil numbers
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By using a clear criteria for these categories this Strategy proposes the Gwynedd Library Service should include nine Area Library at Bangor, Caernarfon, Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Dolgellau, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Tywyn, Barmouth and Bala; four Authority led Community Library at Bethesda, Penygroes, Nefyn and Cricieth and Mobile Services as the most comprehensive and efficient way to deliver a Library Service within the available budget.

This Strategy will result in changes occurring across the existing network of libraries. It will mean rationalizing and reducing opening hours among the area libraries, rationalization hours with community libraries, and modifying the locations and duration of the Community Mobile Service.

Using this categorisation also identifies locations in which the Library Service cannot continue to maintain the provision as it currently is. The Strategy has identified that the existing provision of providing a library service from a building comes to an end in four communities, Deiniolen, Harlech, Penrhyndeudraeth and Llanberis, but due to the likely social impact of this, a 'Community Link' category has been developed 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.

Category :	The facilities available:-
Community Link / Access Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve a population between 1000 - 2000 people within a mile's walking distance • Provide a click and collect service with a partner and / or local Community • Self-service as the main element of the provision supported with a partner / local community and where this is feasible • Arrange alternative access to the service by the authority through monthly mobile service; service to the home; and the children's mobile Service • Computers with access to the internet available to the public through another agency, and supported by the authority

This Strategy offers a core service that has the ability to face the challenge of the digital age. The local authority has a statutory duty to promote the public library service - therefore, it is intended to undertake a plan to promote what is available from libraries and hold specific marketing campaigns during the course of the strategy to increase membership and use.

Providing a Library Service that corresponds with the needs of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 will be considered throughout this Strategy. This Act is involved with improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

The Act will be the basis for the Libraries Standards Framework for 2017 onwards and the National Strategy for Libraries Development which is provided by Welsh Government. Therefore, the Service will aim towards better collaboration; to include people, and reflect the diversity of our communities; to consider things in the long term as well as focussing on the current situation; and to take steps to try to prevent problems - or prevent them from occurring in the first place.

Therefore, adopting the Strategy will respond to the Act's general requirements for long term thinking, to work better with people and communities, to try to prevent problems and follow a consistent implementation method and deliver this in a sustainable way.