

Damien McCann,
Interim Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr

T: 01495 355001

E: committee.services@blaenau-



Our Ref./Ein Cyf.
Your Ref./Eich Cyf.
Contact:/Cysylltwch â: deb.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

MAE HWN YN GYFARFOD Y MAE GAN Y CYHOEDD HAWL EI FNYCHU

Dydd Iau, 15 Chwefror 2024

Annwyl Syr/Madam

PWYLLGOR CRAFFU PARTNERIAETHAU

Cynhelir cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Partneriaethau yn as a hybrid meeting via Microsoft Teams/Abraham Derby Meeting Room, General Offices, Ebbw Vale on Dydd Iau, 22ain Chwefror, 2024 am 10.00 am.

Yn gywir

Damien McCann
Prif Weithredwr Interim

AGENDA

1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD

Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o rybudd os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais am hynny.

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg a byddwn yn cyfathrebu gyda chi yn eich dewis iaith, dim ond i chi rhoi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn creu unrhyw oedi.

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English and we will communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to any delay.

3. **DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU**
- Derbyn datganiadau buddiant a goddefebau.
4. **PWYLLGOR CRAFFU PARTNERIAETHAU** 5 - 8
- Derbyn penderfyniadau'r Pwyllgor Craffu Partneriaethau a gynhaliwyd ar 16 Tachwedd 2023.
- (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y penderfyniadau er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).
5. **DALEN WEITHREDU** 9 - 10
- Derbyn y ddalen weithredu..
6. **PARTNERIAETH LLESIANT LLEOL BLAENAU GWENT** 11 - 20
- Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd, Llywodraethiant a Phartneriaethau.
7. **FFURFLEN FLYNYDDOL 2022/23 SAFONAU LLYFRGELLOEDD CYHOEDDUS CYMRU** 21 - 64
- Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Pobl Ifanc a Phartneriaethau.
8. **BLAENRAGLEN GWAITH: 9 MAI 2024** 65 - 68
- Derbyn y flaenraglen gwaith.

At: Cyngorwyr W. Hodgins (Cadeirydd)
D. Bevan (Is-gadeirydd)
P. Baldwin
D. Davies
M. Day
E. Jones
C. Smith
L. Winnett
D. Woods

Pob Aelod arall (er gwybodaeth)
Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr
Prif Swyddogion

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

SUBJECT: **PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16TH NOVEMBER, 2023**

REPORT OF: **DEMOCRATIC OFFICER**

PRESENT: Councillor W. Hodgins (CHAIR)

Councillors D. Bevan
 P. Baldwin
 D. Davies
 M. Day
 E Jones
 C. Smith
 L. Winnett
 D. Woods

WITH: Chief Officer Commercial & Customer
 Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
 Interim Corporate Director of Education
 Interim Head of School Improvement and Inclusion
 Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships
 Service Manager, Young People and Partnerships
 Service Manager, Customer Experience & Transformation
 Internal Communications Officer
 Scrutiny and Democratic Officer

AND: Matt Lewis, Shared Resource Service
 Kathryn Beavan Seymour, Shared Resource Service
 Phillip Sykes, Aneurin Leisure Trust

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u>
	It was noted that no requests had been received for the

	simultaneous translation service.
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>No apologies for absence were reported.</p>
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins declared an interest in the following:</p> <p>Item No. 8 Position Statement of Performance Against the Service Level Agreement with the Shared Resource Service (SRS) for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.</p>
No. 4	<p><u>PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The decisions of the Special Partnerships Scrutiny Committee held on 19th October, 2023 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee unanimously AGREED that the decisions be accepted as a true recording of proceedings.</p>
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>The Action Sheet arising from the Special meeting held on 19th October, 2023 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>
----	<p><u>CHANGE IN AGENDA ORDER</u></p> <p>The Chair reported that Item No. 8 would be considered first on the agenda.</p>
No. 8	<p><u>POSITION STATEMENT OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH THE SHARED RESOURCE SERVICE (SRS) FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 31ST MARCH 2023</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer</p>

	<p>Commercial & Customer.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that Option 1 be accepted, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Committee considered the position statement on performance for the period 1st April, 2022 to 31st March, 2023 against the SLA in place with SRS, prior to submission to Cabinet; and • Receive annual updates as part of the ongoing partnership with SRS.
No. 7	<p><u>WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS (WPLS) ANNUAL RETURN 2021/22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager, Young People & Partnerships.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the information detailed in the report be accepted (Option 1).</p>
No. 6	<p><u>ANEURIN LEISURE TRUST PERFORMANCE AND MONITORING</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Service Manager, Young People & Partnerships.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted; and to support the Trust in making energy savings, the Committee recommended that the Council look at works that needed to be undertaken to utilise the energy centre on the Steelworks Site. (Option 2)</p>
No. 9	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 22ND FEBRUARY 2024</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Scrutiny & Democratic Officer.</p> <p>The Welsh Libraries Report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.</p>

<p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the FWP for the meeting on 22nd February, 2024 be accepted (Option 1).</p>
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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet

Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
19.10.23	<p>Public Interest Report – Assurance Review Findings Gwent Crematorium and Gwent Archives Business Plans and financial information to be provided to Members of the Committee prior to the Member Briefing Session to be held in March 2024.</p>	Sarah King	Documentation to be provided to Members early in the New Year. Action Update: 07.11.23
16.11.23	<p>Item 6 - Aneurin Leisure Trust Performance and Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member briefing session to be arranged to inform Members of the work the Trust is undertaking regarding sustainable energy. • Appendix 1 Clarification to be provided regarding the statement referring to those employees on furlough (page 22). 	Joanne Sims / Aneurin Leisure Trust	Member briefing session scheduled for 12 th March 2024. Action complete: 14.02.24 Updated to be provided

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Agenda Item 6

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Partnerships Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **22nd February 2024**
Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Partnership**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Stephen Thomas, Leader / Cabinet Member
Corporate Overview and Performance**
Report Submitted by: **Sarah King, Head of Democratic Services,
Governance and Partnerships**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	08.02.24	12.02.24			22.02.24	10.04.24		BG LWP

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the opportunity to monitor performance and progress of the Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Partnership in its role as one of the five Local Delivery Groups of the Gwent Public Services Board.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out a requirement for each Public Services Board (PSB) to prepare and publish an assessment of the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in its area and a subsequent Well-being Plan every five years.
- 2.2 The Gwent PSB undertook a regional Well-being Assessment (*Appendix 1*) which reviewed the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing in Gwent. The assessment used a wide range of qualitative and quantitative information including data, academic research, evidence, and people's views (engagement) to help understand Wellbeing in Gwent. The assessment took an asset-based approach, rather than focussing purely on need, to build upon and identify the strengths of both individuals and communities and it also identified problems and challenges that need to be addressed. The evidence and key issues identified in the assessment have been used to develop the Wellbeing Plan for Gwent.
- 2.3 The Gwent Well-being Plan 2023-28 (*Appendix 2*), published in July 2023, is the first regional well-being plan for Gwent. It sets out the Gwent PSB's Well-being Objectives and the steps it intends to take to meet those objectives, in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Delivery of these will come via the Gwent PSB for regional at-scale activity as well as through five Local Delivery Groups in each of the Gwent LA areas.
- 2.4 Whilst the Gwent PSB has been developing a robust Delivery Plan 2024-28 for the new regional Well-being Plan, the Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being

Partnership (BG LWP) continued to prioritise the 2018-23 well-being programmes around Early Years Integration Transformation, Age-Friendly Communities, Integrated Well-being (IWN), Climate Change Mitigation, Food Resilience, Cost of Living, and delivering a Participatory Budget community well-being grant programme, whilst establishing current and future local well-being priorities aligned to the regional Well-being Plan through public and stakeholder engagement.

- 2.5 The BG LWP has held three stakeholder engagement workshops in addition to three formal LWP meetings since April 2023. The aim of the workshops was for local and sub-regional stakeholders to work in partnership with each other to reflect on the success, barriers and challenges for existing local well-being projects/programmes. Furthermore, to consider well-being priorities for our local communities and identify opportunities for new partnership working and/or where existing well-being projects could be scaled up or used as model to more collaboratively across the sub-region or region.
- 2.6 The stakeholder engagement workshops were well-attended by partners and have provided valuable insight into existing local well-being projects and priorities as well as potential opportunities for increased collaboration and partnership working in future (Appendix 3).
- 2.7 Some key areas of focus and local well-being priorities emerged from these in-person sessions, including working in partnership to: Tackle Health Inequity; Affordable Transport to well-being; Best Start in Life and Early Years; Cost of Living and Sustainable Food Provision; and Protecting and Making use of our Natural Environment. It was also consistently acknowledged that the 3rd Sector and volunteers play a vital role in local well-being delivery given the current funding landscape.
- 2.8 The plan is for this evidence gathered through stakeholder engagement to form a local well-being action plan that aligns to the regional priorities coming out of the regional work to develop a robust Delivery Plan 2024-28 for the Gwent Well-being Plan.
- 2.9 At its most recent meeting in December 2023, the LWP suggested that the regional Delivery Plan should be data and outcomes oriented, whilst providing an opportunity for LDGs to focus on what they hope to achieve locally for the benefit of their communities and follow an evidence-based approach to make a meaningful, lasting impact. It was also noted that the need to maintain momentum at LDG level was important in unlocking capacity and resource to develop and deliver against future local well-being priorities identified through the recent positive stakeholder engagement.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option 1

That Members of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee note and accept the report and appendices as provided.

Option 2

That Members of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee consider and provide specific comment or requests for further information to the BG Local Well-being Partnership.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

The Gwent Well-being Plan covers all LA areas across Gwent, including Blaenau Gwent, with opportunities for the LDGs like the BG LWP to deliver against local priorities through their own local action plans under the Delivery Plan 2024-28 going forward. The Blaenau Gwent Council Corporate Plan 2022-26 also makes a commitment to contribute towards the regional well-being objectives and the eight Marmot principles.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

The Gwent Well-being Plan sets a strategic direction for the Gwent PSB and its LDGs. Specific projects, programmes or partnerships to help achieve the well-being objectives and steps are being developed as part of the Delivery Plan.

Where additional funding may be required, costed recommendations will be made to the appropriate decision maker, but there is no specific funding available to deliver PSB or LDG well-being programmes as part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA) or the Well-being Plan. Blaenau Gwent Council Policy & Partnerships Team is overseeing the coordination of the BG LWP and local input into the Gwent PSB Delivery Plan development work as part of its core business.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Failure to deliver effectively against the Gwent Well-being Plan 2023-28 risks not complying with the collective duties set out in the WBFGA. To mitigate against this, a local well-being action plan is being developed as part of the BG LWP forward work programme.

5.3 ***Legal***

The programme has been developed in line with the 5 Ways of Working and other requirements stated in WBFGA.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The work of the BG LWP relies on and is being developed via effective collaboration with representatives from local partner organisations areas being actively involved from an analytical, programme delivery and public engagement perspective.

Local progress against the regional Well-being Plan is reported to the Gwent PSB, which in turn is supported by the local representation (through officer reps from BGCBC & statutory PSB partners) on the Gwent Strategic Well-being Action Group (GSWAG).

Blaenau Gwent Council Policy & Partnerships Team is overseeing the coordination of the BG LWP and local input into the Gwent PSB Delivery Plan development work as part of its core business.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The two main Objectives in the Gwent Well-being Plan 2024-28 are:

1. We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all.
2. We want to create a more climate-aware Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, ensuring our well-being now and for future generations.

The five steps to achieve these two overarching objectives are:-

- Take action to reduce the Cost of Living crisis in the longer term
- Provide and enable the supply of good quality, affordable, appropriate homes
- Take action to reduce our carbon emissions, help Gwent adapt to climate change, and protect and restore our natural environment
- Take action to address inequalities, particularly in relation to health, through the framework of the [Marmot principles](#)
- Enable and support resilient, connected, thriving and safe communities

The regional Gwent PSB Delivery Plan 2024-28 will be centred around these in the context of four Areas of Focus for well-being as agreed by the PSB in December 2023, aiming to address some of the recommendations from the [Building a Fairer Gwent: Improving Health Equity & the Social Determinants](#) report through the regional well-being delivery plan:

- Everyone has the Best Start in Life.
- Everyone has the same Economic Chances.
- Everyone lives in a Place they feel Safe.
- Everyone lives in Climate-ready Communities where our Environment is Valued and Protected.

As a first step in this process, the Gwent Strategic Well-being Action Group (GSWAG) is conducting a regional mapping exercise to identify and collate the existing projects, programmes and activities that are taking place at a local, sub-regional and/or regional level across Gwent relating to these four areas. The aim of this exercise is ultimately to Identify any gaps or opportunities where more collaboration and partnership working, or upscaling existing work, could improve outcomes and add value at a regional Gwent level.

It is expected that local delivery of the regional priorities and/or programmes identified in the new Delivery Plan would be overseen by the LDGs. This will

include a) local delivery of regional priorities, and b) the opportunity to focus on collaborative activity on issues which may be felt acutely in Blaenau Gwent but are not necessarily priorities at a Gwent level.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The Well-being Plan delivery process, supported by engagement, involvement and local delivery to ensure local well-being issues are prioritised as part of the BG LWP's well-being programme, are crucial in ensuring that the regional well-being plan is delivered effectively in Blaenau Gwent to improve local well-being for our communities.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Feedback from Stakeholder Engagement workshops about current and future well-being priorities for BG communities:

Consider where we (as partner organisations) and local community groups are already making a difference, protect our assets and try to build on that good work.

Less reactive short-term funding, more preventative long-term approach based on levels of need.

Place local residents in areas of higher deprivation at the centre of identifying actions to reduce inequalities in their local communities.

Put health equity and sustainability at the centre of planning decisions.

Develop linked or shared data to better identify and support those who are homeless or living in insecure housing to address determinants of health e.g. through Decarb retrofit.

Tackle the lack of affordable or appropriate transport options that limit people's access to health care, social & well-being activities, affordable food etc.

Shift to prevention approaches in delivering sustainable and healthy food security.

Identify any areas of low childcare provision, map to deprivation and assess quality of provision, with a view to improving provision for the benefit of our children and young people.

Future local Actions & Steps to consider as part of the local well-being action plan development process:

Lead on best practice and set the example as LWP member organisations e.g. Living Wage & support for staff to actively travel / use greener transport options to work.

Work in partnership with Community Transport Association Wales to develop better transport options for lonely & isolated people.

Work with young people to better communicate available youth services and future youth services.

Best start in life: consider the quality and safety of outdoor spaces and play areas and encourage more active travel to School options.

Identify opportunities to combine new crop and biodiversity growth on public sector land.

Encourage increased gym & leisure centre use from residents in higher deprivation areas by considering opportunities for subsidised / concessionary membership.

Tackle the Volunteering gap between the number of community groups and 3rd sector organisations looking for volunteers vs a perceived current lack of local volunteers.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Well-being Plan takes consideration of the data and future trend information including the Gwent well-being assessment and public engagement on what people consider would make the area a better place for the future and have most positive impact on their well-being.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The BG LWP focuses on Prevention as one of the five ways of working, and outlines a series of Steps for taking preventative action to help achieve the each of the well-being objectives.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Local Delivery Groups (LDG) of the Gwent PSB have existed within each local authority area in Gwent since the inception of the GPSB, initially to ensure the continued delivery of the local 2018-23 Well-Being Plans, and to consider local delivery against regional well-being objectives going forward. Our LDG is known as the Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Partnership (BG LWP). Membership of the BG LWP comprises officer representatives of partner organisations who are key to local well-being delivery, including:

- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- Natural Resources Wales
- South Wales Fire & Rescue
- Gwent Police
- Office of the Gwent Police & Crime Commissioner
- Probation Service
- Department for Work & Pensions
- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- GAVO

- Tai Calon Community Housing
- Coleg Gwent
- Aneurin Leisure Trust

Additional subject-specific partner organisations are also engaged with via regular steering group and partnerships associated with well-being programme delivery, such as the Climate Mitigation Steering Group, BG Food Partnership, IWB Collaborative, 50+ Stakeholder Network.

6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***

The BG LWP follows an approach of considering opportunities to enhance local well-being through an evidence-based approach taking into account the well-being and sustainable development pillars: economic, social, cultural and environment issues. The local well-being planning process follows an integrative approach that considers each of the five ways of working (including Integration), and opportunities for integration between local & regional well-being objectives and with the Marmot principles.

6.8 ***EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

The engagement approach is built on the national principles for public engagement. There are number of established forums which support engagement covered by the protected characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Gwent PSB, regional Gwent PSB Scrutiny Committee and BGCBC Partnerships Scrutiny Committee monitor progress of the BG LWP through its forward work programme performance management arrangements.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- **Appendix 1** – [Gwent Well-being Assessment](#)
- **Appendix 2** – [Gwent Well-being Plan 2023-28](#)
- **Appendix 3** – Gwent PSB LDG Update Blaenau Gwent Dec 2023 (*attached*)

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BLAENAU GWENT LOCAL DELIVERY GROUP UPDATE



PARTNERIAETH LLESIAANT LLEOL

Blaenau Gwent

LOCAL WELL-BEING PARTNERSHIP

The Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Partnership (LWP) has held three stakeholder engagement workshops in addition to three formal LWP meetings since April 2023.

The aim of the workshops have been for local and sub-regional stakeholders to work in partnership with each other to reflect on the success, barriers & challenges for existing local well-being projects/programmes, as well as consider well-being priorities for our local communities & identify opportunities for new partnership working and/or where existing well-being projects could be scaled up or used as model to more collaboratively across the region or sub-region.

The stakeholder engagement workshops have been well-attended by partners and have provided valuable insight into local well-being projects and priorities.



BG LWP Development Session at Rassau Resource Community Centre, July 2023



BG LWP Development Session at the General Offices Ebbw Vale, November 2023

The plan is for this evidence gathered through stakeholder engagement to form a local well-being action plan that aligns to the regional priorities coming out of the Gwent WBP Delivery Plan development work.

At its most recent meeting in December 2023, the LWP noted the approach to developing the regional delivery plan and suggested that it should be data & outcomes oriented, whilst providing an opportunity for LDGs to focus on what we hope to achieve locally and follow evidence-based approaches to make a meaningful impact. It was also noted that we must keep momentum at Local Delivery Group level to develop & deliver against local well-being priorities identified through recent stakeholder engagement.

Agenda Item 7

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Partnership Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **22nd February 2024**
Report Subject: **Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2022/23**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member for Education**
Report Submitted by: **Jo Sims, Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships**
Tracy Jones, Aneurin Leisure Trust

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	12.02.24	14.02.24			22.02.24	10.04.24		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the report submitted to the Culture Division of Welsh Government with respect to the sixth year of the Sixth Assessment Framework for the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) return 2022/23. The sixth framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 'Connected and Ambitious Libraries' was set to expire in 2020 and a new framework created. However, due to the impact of the pandemic the development of the seventh framework has been delayed and the sixth framework is being extended until 2025.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Aneurin Leisure Trust has been commissioned by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to deliver the Library Service as part of their general operations since 2014. In April 2020, the client function for the Leisure Trust moved to the Education Directorate. This is the fourth year that this report has been submitted since this arrangement and the first to the Partnership Scrutiny. Public libraries are a statutory service as laid out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Since 2002, the Welsh Government has implemented successive assessment frameworks which have helped bring a more consistent level of public library provision across Wales.

2.2 Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 it is a statutory duty for every library authority (Local Authorities) in Wales to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof'.

2.3 This report has been prepared based on information provided by Blaenau Gwent's annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of Welsh Government in June 2023. This was submitted through the Aneurin Leisure Trust.

- 2.4 The sixth framework of Welsh public library standards builds on the developments in the fifth framework. It comprises 12 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators to monitor how well library services realise these benefits for the local community and the people of Wales. For this return, only one impact statement was required, as opposed to four case studies in previous years. It was also the return of full reporting of all data relating to quality indicators, since the pandemic.
- 2.5 Blaenau Gwent's Library annual return highlights the following performance against the WPLS:
- Blaenau Gwent continues to achieve all 12 core entitlements.
 - The service achieved 7 quality indicators in full and 2 in part. The remaining target was not met.
 - WPLSQ1 1 and 2 Customer Surveys:
The service performs well in this area and customer service feed-back remains consistently high.
100% of adults experience the library as a safe and inclusive place.
The average rating out of 10 awarded by children using the library is 10.
 - WPLSQ1 3 Support for Individual Development :
This is a target indicator, which has been met in full. This relates to the provision of a wide range of support services in all libraries, e.g ICT provision, training opportunities and reader development activities.
 - WPLSQ1 4 Support for Health and Wellbeing:
This is a target indicator which has been met in full and the service is clearly making efforts to support customers' wellbeing through a variety of activities and other provision.
 - WPLSQ1 5 User Training:
98% of attendees said that that attendance helped them achieve their goals. This year has seen an increasing number of new partners using libraries to engage with the community. This has enabled the service to deliver new activities to new audiences.
 - WPLSQ1 6 User Attendances at Library Events:
1,629 events were delivered over 22/23.
 - WPLSQ1 7 Location of Service Points:
This is a target indicator and has been fully met.
98% of the population of Blaenau Gwent are within 2.5 miles of their nearest library. This demonstrates that the service has excellent reach into local communities.
 - WPLSQ1 8 Library Use:
There has been a 32% increase in adult book borrowing.
There has been a 115% increase in junior book borrowing.

There has been a 33% increase in BorrowBox usage, which is the highest increase in Wales (e-books and e-audio)

- **WPLSQ1 9 Up to date and Appropriate Reading Materials:**
This target indicator has not been met. Only 12 services across Wales met this target. Despite not meeting this target, 90% of customers think the choice of books is very good. The total spend on book stock was £64,144 with an increase in spend on Welsh and Junior. The spend for 21/22 was £63,921. To meet this target the service would need to spend approx. £147,000
- **WPLSQI 10 Welsh Language Resources:**
The target indicator has been met with 6% of the book fund being spent on Welsh materials.
- **WPLSQI 11 On-line Access:**
This target indicator has been met in full. The service has 64 public access machines, with 11,352 hours of usage over 22/23.
- **WPLSQI 12 Supply of Requests**
This target has been partially met. This is due to requests from the regional inter lending scheme, Books4U not being included. If the Books4U requests were included, the service reports that the target of 15 days would have been met. It should also be noted that this quality indicator has been removed for future reporting. We met the 7 days target, with 67% of titles being supplied within 7 days. Only narrowly missed the target for 15 days, with 77% of titles being supplied within that timeframe.
- **WPLSQI 13 Staffing Levels and Qualifications:**
This target has been partially met. The service has 14.4 FTE, to meet the staffing target, the service would need 25 FTE. However, the service meets the target relating to staff training and has a suitably qualified head of library services. It should be noted that no service in Wales met this target in full.
- **WPLSQI 14 Operational Expenditure:**
The service's operational expenditure is above the median for Wales.
- **WPLSQI 15 Cost per Visit:**
The cost per visit is £4.28. This compares with the highest being £6.22 and the lowest 0.41p. It should be noted this indicator has been removed for future reporting.
- **WPLSQI 16 Opening Hours:**
The service did not report any unstaffed opening hours, unplanned closures of static service points or missed home delivery visits.

- 2.6 Library services in Blaenau Gwent are delivered by the Aneurin Leisure Trust on behalf of the local authority and are a key component in both the Local Authority and Trust's service delivery plans.
- 2.7 The continued partnership work with key organisations remains a strength of the service and enables Blaenau Gwent to support the needs within communities and deliver appropriate activities e.g. the Community Hubs provision.
- 2.8 Importantly, the return indicates that overall Blaenau Gwent has improved its performance in relation to performance and spend on stock.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 It is recommended that Members scrutinise the content of the report and consider the following options:
- 3.2 Option 1 – Members are asked to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and accept the report.
- 3.3 Option 2 – Members do not accept the report and contribute by making appropriate recommendations to the Cabinet Committee.
4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 sets out the statutory duties of the public library authorities to 'provide a comprehensive and efficient library service' to their communities.
- 4.2 The Library Service fully supports Blaenau Gwent's Well-being Plan and also acts as an agency for economic wellbeing in our local communities through supporting learning at all stages of life helping with illiteracy, lack of skills and the digital divide. The Library Service also contributes to a range of Welsh Government outcomes such as literacy, skills and learning, digital inclusion, poverty, health and well-being. Library provision spans these outcomes, offering a range of services which often support two or more of the outcomes simultaneously.
- 4.3 The Library Service is seen as a key partner in tackling the problems of social isolation, inequality, disadvantage, fractured communities and ill health.
- 4.4 The library service acts as a single point of contact for local people to access public services and also gain information on local health issues, providing space for local voluntary organisations to provide advice and information on health and other matters
5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 There are no current implications associated with the options proposed in section 3 above.
- 5.1.1 During the review of the Leisure Trust, the Trust committed to increasing the book fund from £27,000 to circa £43,000 in 2018/19 and be reviewed year on

year in order to achieve a more appropriate budget going forward. In 2022/23 the Trust spent £64,144 a further increase exceeding the original agreement.

5.1.2 Furthermore, the Trust continues to invest on a pan Wales level in Borrow box to increase the availability of e-books and e-audio. This includes spend on Welsh Language books to meet that target.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There are no risks associated with this report. Regular dialogue through established governance arrangements ensures that collectively, between the Council and the Trust, the library service is supported to meet the standards required.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal issues associated with this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

5.4.1 There are no direct staffing issues with respect to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in relation to this report. However, the report highlights concern about the level of staffing within the library service.

5.4.2 This will be an area of discussion and monitoring through the governance arrangements between the Council and the Leisure Trust.

6. ***Supporting Evidence***

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 Blaenau Gwent continues to meet all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

The return has highlighted that overall Blaenau Gwent has improved its performance in this sixth year of the sixth framework. Key highlights include:

- Customer feedback remains consistently high. Customers of Blaenau Gwent Libraries clearly value their service.
- The continued partnership work with key organisations remains a strength of the service and enables Blaenau Gwent to support the needs within communities and deliver appropriate activities. The service clearly makes efforts to engage with communities in innovative ways to respond to changing needs.
- The service is carrying no vacancies, for the first time in many years, this is viewed as hugely positive by Welsh Government
- The service has a strong digital offer. There are good levels of IT provision, above the median for Wales. IT usage has increased month on month. The launch of the data sim scheme has enhanced the service to digitally excluded residents.
- The service has adapted to the needs of local communities. By delivering a more holistic service, the social value and community support role has been clearly demonstrated through a comprehensive narrative and impact statement.
- The service has demonstrated impact in supporting users through the cost-of-living crisis. The warm spaces campaign continues to be

popular, new partners, e.g CAB and many new anti-poverty initiatives have been delivered.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

To be able to continue to access a fully accessible and professional library service within the local community.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Local people, groups/agencies and volunteers are engaged through regular customer surveys, in line with the Welsh Public Library Standards (WLPS).

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The library standards will help establish a sustainable model for the Library Service going forward.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Libraries provide support with many key preventative approaches, such as improving literacy levels for children and young people through early intervention within communities.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Partnership working with a number of agencies/organisations is embedded in the ethos of the Library Service.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The library service has evolved to become the 'go-to' community venue for a wide range of services. Over the year, there has been an increasing number of partner organisations accessing libraries, to engage with the community. The service is viewed as the public face of the council, through the successful establishment of the community hubs. There are also close working links with all other council departments, particularly Education, Social Services and Regeneration.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

N/a

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

N/A

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

Performance reports related to the Leisure Trust are monitored through the Leisure and Libraries Strategic Group, Partnership Scrutiny Committee, the Executive and Council.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 –Welsh Govt. Assessment report 22/23*
- *Appendix 2 – Welsh Public Library Standards Data 22/23*
- *Appendix 3 – Impact Statement, Narrative and Future Direction 22/23*

Welsh Public Library Standards Sixth Framework: Blaenau Gwent (Aneurin Leisure Trust)

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Blaenau Gwent's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Blaenau Gwent met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Blaenau Gwent achieved 7 in full and 2 in part. The remaining target was not met.

Customers of Blaenau Gwent Libraries clearly value their service; customer satisfaction is above the median for most indicators. The continued partnership work with key organisations remains a strength of the service and enables Blaenau Gwent to support the needs within communities and deliver appropriate activities.

The service clearly makes efforts to engage with communities in innovative ways to respond to changing needs. The service is aware of the need to address issues around active membership and footfall and has funding for two new library development officers to help target this.

The service's annual report highlights several changes in the ways that members of the local community are engaging with libraries, in part likely related to the designation of libraries as 'community hubs'. Specifically, an increasing number of people spending longer periods of time in the library in response to the cost-of-living crisis, and changes in patterns of IT use with more customers bringing their own devices to use in the library.

Whilst the service meets the target for proportional Welsh language spend, the overall level of materials spend is a concern, especially as this has been an ongoing issue for Blaenau Gwent over a number of years. The fact that, for the first time in many years, the service is carrying no vacancies is hugely positive, although it is acknowledged that the service is still unable to meet the per capita staffing and qualified staff targets.

- 100% of adults surveyed said they experience the library as an enjoyable safe and inclusive space (Q11).
- There is a good level of IT provision; Blaenau Gwent is above the median for the number of computer devices available to the public (Q111).
- Although staff per capita remains below the target, for the first time in many years the service is carrying no vacancies (Q113).
- Blaenau Gwent did not report any unstaffed opening hours, unplanned closures of static service points or missed home deliveries (Q116).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Blaenau Gwent reported meeting all of the 12 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary where this varied from previous years. The independent assessor accepts the self-assessment based on assessments made in previous years.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Blaenau Gwent is achieving 7 in full and 2 in part. The remaining target was not met.

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Support for individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	√	
b) Information literacy and skills training	√	
c) E-government support	√	
d) Reader development	√	
QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being		Met in full
i) Book Prescription Wales scheme	√	
ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme	√	
iii) Designated health & well-being collection	√	
iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours	√	
v) Signposting to health & well-being services	√	
QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements	√	Met in full
QI 7 Location of service points	√	Met in full
QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material		Not met
Acquisitions per capita	x	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	x	
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources		Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	√	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	-	
QI 11 Online access:		Met in full
a) i) Public access to Internet	√	
ii) Wi-Fi provision	√	
QI 12 Supply of requests		Partially met
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	√	
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	x	

Quality Indicator	Met?
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:	Partially met
i) Staff per capita	x
ii) Qualified staff per capita	x
iii) Head of service qualification/training	√
iv) CPD percentage	√
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	√ Met in full

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people’s lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Blaenau Gwent completed its adult user survey in March 2023 and its children’s user survey in February 2023.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	94%	4/16	58%	90%	98%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	96%	1/16	41%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	98%	=7/17	82%	96%	100%

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Blaenau Gwent provided an impact statement which referred to the value customers derived from the Warm Spaces initiative and the associated activities which launched in October 2022. Customers struggling to pay their bills valued having a warm, safe and welcoming place to go which fostered companionship and well-being. They also enjoyed participating in activities such as Knit and Natter and Cuppa and Company sessions and benefitted from free access to WiFi and computers. One customer who had lost his job reported that, as well as valuing the warm space, the support he received from the library had contributed to him getting a new job and accommodation and reflected that “*without the library I think I would have ended up on the streets*”.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Blaenau Gwent's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	70%	8/16	24%	69.5%	90%
c) health and well-being	44%	=12/16	35%	66.5%	94%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	100%	=1/16	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	90%	11/16	80%	91%	99%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/17	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	85%	9/16	65%	86%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%	=10/17	94%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.0	=12/16	8.0	9.3	9.7
QI 5 User training					
a) attendances per capita	7	=13/22	1	10.5	222
c) informal training per capita	131	10/19	5	131	424
QI 6 attendances at events per capita					
	161	13/22	13	165	559
QI 8 Library use					
a) visits per capita	2,084	13/21	781	2,106	4,814
b) virtual visits per capita	175	20/22	124	537.5	7,979
c) active borrowers per capita	79	18/22	43	106.5	167
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita					
	37	19/22	13	53	864
QI 11 Online access					
a) Computers per 10,000	9.55	6/22	3.32	7.99	16.99
b) % of available time used by the public	11%	=9/19	7%	11%	77%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications¹					
(v) a) total volunteers	9	-	0	8	256
b) volunteer hours	745	-	0	583.5	14,014
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£10,093	13/21	£6,726	£11,476	£27,330
b) % on staff,	70%	=5/21	46%	64%	78%
% on information resources	9%	=16/21	5%	12%	21%
% on equipment and buildings	3%	=11/21	1%	3%	29%
% on other operational costs;	17%	10/21	1%	15%	35%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	=12/21	-£479	£145	£2,865

¹ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 15 Net cost per visit ²	£4.28	17/19	£0.41	£2.76	£6.22
QI 16 Opening hours ³					
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0%	=1/22	0%	0.05%	0.95%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0%	=1/20	0%	0%	3.74%

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

The service performs well with regard to Making a Difference (QI1), with responses above the median for most measures. For Customer Satisfaction (QI2), the service is at or around the median for most measures. Blaenau Gwent reports changing use over the year in response to the cost-of-living crisis, with an increasing number of people spending long periods of time in the library, saving money on energy bills and accessing free services, including refreshments. Although the QI1 indicator for adults finding helpful information for health and wellbeing is below the median, QI4 is met in full and the service is clearly making efforts to support customers' wellbeing through a variety of activities and other provision. Brynmawr and Tredegar Libraries are designated as well-being hubs, and the service provides Cuppa and Company sessions and working in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to promote health and well-being activities. This year has seen an increasing number of new partners using libraries to engage with the community. This has enabled the service to deliver new activities to new audiences, including working with 'Business in Focus' to deliver live music workshops.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Although Blaenau Gwent is below the median for library visits and active borrowers per capita (QI8), footfall and issues are increasing, indicating that customers are returning following the pandemic. The service notes a trend towards users who may not be active members accessing libraries for information, activities, social events, warm spaces etc. Attendance per capita at events was close to the median (QI6). There was also an increase in the number of community loans and visits to residential homes over the year, as well as an extension of home delivery services. Whilst both adults' and children's issues per capita are below the median for Welsh authorities, over 22/23 the number of BorrowBox borrowers increased by one third. Although virtual visits per capita is below the median (QI8), Blaenau Gwent reports strong engagement with the library's social media presence, particularly Facebook.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Blaenau Gwent is below the median for materials spend and number of acquisitions per capita, and does not meet the target for this indicator (QI9). However, the service

² Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

³ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

has improved performance against the Welsh language spend target (QI10) over 22/23; this includes Welsh language learning materials such as board games and study aids. It is anticipated that this will help the service to increase the number of Welsh issues per capita. Although the target for Supply of Requests (QI12) was only partially met, this is due to requests from the regional inter lending scheme, Books4U not being included. If the Books4U requests were included, the service reports that the target of 15 days would have been met.

Blaenau Gwent is above the median for the number of computer devices available to the public (QI11) and the service reports that, during 22/23, IT usage has been increasing month on month. However, there has been a change in usage patterns: the number of users has increased, but time spent on PCs is considerably lower as users are accessing machines for different purposes, e.g. checking emails, printing. There is also a marked increase in the number of users bringing in their own devices. Furthermore, the promotion of IT services outside of the building has been extended, including a partnership with the National Databank through the Good Things Foundation to distribute free data sims to people in need. A review of ICT facilities and services is planned for 23/24.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Although the figure for both overall and qualified staff per capita remain below the target (QI13), for the first time in many years the service is carrying no vacancies. The proportion of operational expenditure allocated to staffing is above the median (QI14). Five new members of staff were appointed to permanent positions, with some libraries having a complete new team. Blaenau Gwent reports this has had a positive impact on performance and customer service. Blaenau Gwent did not report any unstaffed opening hours, unplanned closures of static service points or missed home deliveries (QI16).

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Blaenau Gwent reports on a range of services relevant to the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, including cohesive communities, health, prosperity, equality and environmental issues. Supporting local residents with the cost-of-living crisis has been a key priority for Blaenau Gwent. With the closure of the main council offices (Civic Centre) and the transition to all face-to-face council enquiries now being delivered at libraries, through the provision of community hubs, library buildings are increasingly seen as the 'go-to' venue for anyone in need, including food bank referrals, fuel vouchers, cost of living advice, period products and warm packs.

Other activities have included a new Citizens Advice Service was with weekly drop-in sessions being delivered in all libraries and the roll-out of the Warm Spaces campaign in all libraries. Support for jobseekers has continued to be a core aspect of library service provision, working closely with colleagues in Adult Community Learning. The service's sim card project, working with The Good Things Foundation and the National Data Bank, helps bridge the digital divide and prevent data poverty within the community.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Blaenau Gwent intends to build upon the success of community hub provision to expand its approach to partnership work. The plan to re-locate Abertillery Library to a new town centre location will be a main focus for the coming year. The service is working closely with the regeneration department to secure additional funding which, if successful, will transform Trinity Chapel, into a modern, vibrant library and community adult education centre. Funding has been secured to recruit two new library development officers from the Skills Priority Funding stream to help target active membership and footfall. In addition, a review of the ICT provision is planned for 23/24, specifically an improved Wi-Fi solution to meet the diverse needs of the community, including streaming, video conferencing etc.

6. Conclusion

Customers of Blaenau Gwent Libraries clearly value their service; customer satisfaction is above the median for most indicators. The continued partnership work with key organisations remains a strength of the service and enables Blaenau Gwent to support the needs within communities and deliver appropriate activities. The service clearly makes efforts to engage with communities in innovative ways to respond to changing needs. The service is aware of the need to address issues around active membership and footfall and has funding for two new library development officers to help target this.

The service's annual report highlights several changes in the ways that members of the local community are engaging with libraries, in part likely related to the designation of libraries as 'community hubs'. Specifically, an increasing number of people spending longer periods of time in the library in response to the cost-of-living crisis, and changes in patterns of IT use with more customers bringing their own devices to use in the library.

Whilst the service meets the target for proportional Welsh language spend, the overall level of materials spend is a concern, especially as this has been an ongoing issue for Blaenau Gwent over a number of years. The fact that, for the first time in many years, the service is carrying no vacancies is hugely positive, although it is acknowledged that the service is still unable to meet the per capita staffing and qualified staff targets.

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WPLSQI 1 Making a difference**Framework 6**

Percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	70%
Percentage of adults who have found helpful information for health and well-being at the library	44%
Percentage of adults who experience the library as an enjoyable safe and inclusive place	100%
Percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives	96%
<i>Survey dates (month & year)</i>	Mar-23

Authority comment:

There was a total of 780 returns for the adult survey. The Making a Difference QI continues to consistently remain at a high customer satisfaction level. The 100% rating of customers experiencing the library as a place, is partly the result of customers appreciating our Warm Spaces campaign, with many positive comments received from the surveys. Customers have commented on how having a warm, welcoming space has living crisis. These comments have demonstrated the changing use over the year, with an increasing number of people spending long periods of time in the library, saving money on energy bills and accessing free se

Percentage of children aged 7-16 who think that the library helps them learn and find things out	94%
<i>Survey dates (month & year)</i>	Feb-23

Authority comment:

There was a total of 250 returns for the Children's survey. A number of surveys were conducted via school visits and during children's activities.

WPLSQI 2 Customer satisfaction**Framework 6**

Percentage of adults who think that the choice of books is 'very good' or 'good'	90%
Percentage of adults who think that the standard of customer care is 'very good' or 'good'	99%
Percentage of adults who think that the IT facilities provided are 'very good' or 'good'	85%
Percentage of adults who think that the library is 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%
<i>Survey dates (month & year)</i>	Mar-23

Authority comment:

Overall, the customer satisfaction remains consistently high. There has been a high number of personal comments made on the surveys, giving powerful, qualitative evidence to demonstrate the impact of libraries. T number of comments regarding poor Wi-Fi connectivity, at times, and as a result we are investigating options to improve the service.

Average overall rating out of ten awarded by users aged 7-16 for the library they use	9.0
<i>Survey dates (month & year)</i>	Feb-23

Authority comment:

WPLSQI 3 Support for individual development (Comment on any change to provision since 2018-19)**2022-23****% of total**

Number of static service points open for 10 hours per week or more providing:

Basic support in the use of ICT infrastructure provided (including Wi-Fi) and in accessing the range of electronic information resources available.

6

100%

Training to improve literacy, numeracy, information literacy and digital skills.

6

100%

Support for users to access local and national e-government resources.

6

100%

Reader development programmes/activities for both adults and children

6

100%

This target has been met.

WPLSQI 4 Support for health & wellbeing (comment on any change to provision since 2018-19)**2022-23****% of total**

Number of static service points open for 10 hours per week or more providing:

Books Prescription Wales scheme

6

100%

Better with Books scheme

6

100%

Designated health & wellbeing collection

6

100%

Information about healthy lifestyles & behaviours

6

100%

Signposting to health & wellbeing services

6

Number of static service points open for 10 hours per week or more providing:

Shared Reading groups

1

Book clubs

3

Health information partnerships

6

Dementia friendly champions and services

6

Mental health awareness activities

6

Authority comment:

WPLSQI 5 User training	2022-23	Per 1,000 pop'n
Total number of attendances at pre-arranged user training sessions organised by the library	500	7 per 1000 pop'n
Percentage of attendees who said that attendance helped them to achieve their goals	98%	%
Please indicate the method used to calculate this figure	Representative sample	
Approximate number of feedback forms distributed	200	
Number of feedback forms included in the calculation	150	
Number of customers helped by means of informal training during the year	8,788	131
Authority comment (including note on the method used to calculate the results):		

A sample survey was conducted. Surveys were distributed at a variety of pre-arranged training sessions, including library tours, inductions, family history sessions demonstrating Ancestry and Findmypast, and digital

WPLSQI 6 User attendances at library events	2022-23	per 1000 pop'n
Total number of attendances at events and activities organised by the library	10,776	161 per 1000 pop'n
Number of static service points open for 10 hours per week or more providing events or activities for users with special requirements	6	100%
This target has been met.		
Authority comment, including examples of events:		
1,629 events were delivered over 22/23. A wide range of events and activities were delivered, including Creative Writing, Baby Yoga, STEM activities, craft sessions, Baby Rhyme Time, Family History, Knit and Natter, Lego Club, Coffee mornings etc. All libraries have provided events and activities for users with special requirements, including visually impaired users, Ukrainian groups, adults with learning disabilities, pupils from special schools.		

WPLSQI 7 Location of service points	2022-23	
Population density (persons per hectare)	6.4	
% of households within 2.5 miles (or 10 minutes travelling time by public transport) of a static service point, or within ¼ mile of a mobile library stop	98%	%
This target has been met.		

WPLSQI 8 Library use	2022-23	Per 1,000 pop'n
Total number of visits to library premises during the year	139,638	2,084
Please indicate the method used for calculation	Full year count	
Total number of external visits to the library's web site during the year	11,744	175
Total number of active borrowers during the year	5,310	79
Total number of library members	30,231	451

Total number of adult book issues	61,068	912
Total number of children's book issues	14,224	212
Total number of audio-visual issues	3,204	48
Total number of electronic downloads	17,408	260

Authority comment (include names of any shared service points with shared counting mechanisms and date of last membership data cleanse; please also provide a note of any statistics collected on social media use)

All libraries have electronic people counters. Two libraries are in shared buildings with Community Adult Education (Brynmawr and Tredegar) Both libraries share a people counter as there is no way to differentiate for Community Hubs are based in all libraries, in full-time libraries the hubs operate every open week day, in part-time libraries, the hub is in operation one day a week. Over 22/23 there has been a total footfall of 6,132 included in the total number of visits to library premises. Facebook continues to be the most popular social media platform, with a reach of 62,446. There has been an increase of 103% compared to 21/22. We have number of Facebook users, 151% increase compared to last year. We have also seen an increase in our reach for our Twitter account, with a 47% increase. A membership data cleanse was completed in March 2022 709% compared to 21/22, demonstrating that customers are returning in high numbers. Issue statistics are also steadily increasing month on month, with adult issues showing a 32% increase and children's issues a 10% increase year on year. We had the highest increase in usage of Borrowbox compared to all Welsh authorities at 33% increase. Over 22/23 we increased our BorrowBox borrowers by one third and the number of new users we attract than it was the previous year, showing a very positive upwards trend. The authority would also like to acknowledge that the active membership figure does not include a high percentage of our users that access our services via our app or website. (see our guidance) Over the year the social value of our service has had a clear impact, clearly demonstrating the need for a more holistic approach, as opposed to hard statistical data.

WPLSQI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material	2022-23	Per 1,000 pop'n
Total number of items acquired	5,714	85
Total materials expenditure (from WPLSQI 14)	£64,144	£957

This target has not been met. Please add any comments below:

Please note no e-magazines have been included in the total number of items acquired. (not supplied by WG)

Total expenditure on material purchased for children	£11,268	
Does this figure include expenditure on a Schools Library Service?	No	
Percentage of materials expenditure for children	18%	%

Authority comment

WPLSQI 10 Welsh language resources	2022-23	Per 1,000 pop'n
Total expenditure on materials in the Welsh language	£3,599	
Percentage of materials expenditure on materials in the Welsh language	6%	%
Spend per 1,000 Welsh-speaking resident population		£
This target has been met.		

Total number of issues of Welsh language material	2,473	37
Authority comment		

WPLSQI 11 Online access (comment on any change to provision since 2018-19)	2022-23	Per 10,000 pop'n
Do all libraries provide a minimum of one device giving public access to the Internet and networked digital content?	Yes	

This target has been met.			

Do all static service points provide Wi-Fi access for the public using their own devices?	Yes		
This target has been met.			

Total number of devices giving public access to the Internet:	64	9.55	per 10,000 pop'n
Available in static libraries	64		
Available in mobile libraries			
Authority comment:			

Number of hours available for use of public access ICT facilities during the year	99,050		
Number of hours recorded for use of public access ICT facilities during the year	11,352	11%	%
Authority comment:			

Over 22/23 IT usage has been increasing month on month. It should be noted that there has been a change in pattern of usage over 22/23. Although the usage of the People's Network machines is low compared to users have increased, but time spent on PCs is considerably lower. This demonstrates users are accessing machines for different uses, e.g checking emails, printing etc.in short sessions. There is also a marked increase in bringing in their own devices to access our Wi-Fi and support. We are currently unable to record accurate Wi-fi usage time. All partners accessing libraries also make use of the public wi-fi. As a service we would like to note that this statistic is not a true reflection of the online access we provide. On a typical day the number of partners and 'agile' IT users far exceed users accessing desktop PCs through the People's Network. A review of ICT facilities for 23/24

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WPLSQI 12 Supply of requests	2022-23	%
Total number of requests for specific items made during the year	1,732	
Number of requests which are notified to the user as being available within 7 calendar days of the request being made	1,165	67%
This target has been met.		

Number of requests which are notified to the user as being available within 15 calendar days of the request being made	1,337	77%
This target has not been met. Please add any comments below:		

In addition to the total number of requests reported, (from data from the LMS) 1,573 requests were made from the regional inter lending scheme, Books4U. These requests are not placed on the LMS and are therefore a majority of the requests made via Books4U are supplied within 10 days. As per guidance we have taken the data only from the LMS, which excludes Books4U requests. If the Books4U requests were included we would have a higher percentage of requests notified within 7 days.

WPLSQI 13 Staffing levels & qualifications	2022-23	Per 10,000 pop'n
Total number of staff (FTE)	14.4	2.15
This target has not been met. Please add any comments below:		
Authority comment (including information about shared staff):		

The service is currently carrying no vacancies. Five new members of staff were appointed to permanent positions, with some libraries having a complete new team. This has had a positive impact on performance and the service continues to work closely with our colleagues in Adult Community Education. There are approximately 37 hours per week of staffing support in Tredegar and Brynmawr Libraries, which is not included in our staffing figures.

Number of staff holding recognised library related qualifications (FTE) (including cognate areas)	2.0	0.30
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This target has not been met. Please add any comments below:

Number of staff holding qualifications in cognate areas (FTE)	0.0
Number of posts which require a library qualification	2.0
Number of staff with library qualifications in posts which do not require a library qualification (FTE)	1.0

Authority comment:
Two posts within the service require a library qualification. (Library Services Manager and Library Team Leader) The Library Team Leader is currently working towards Chartership. One Library Assistant is a Charter

Does the designated operational manager of library services hold a formal qualification in librarianship or information science or information management?	Yes
Please give details of current qualifications held:	MCLIP

This target has been met.

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Where does this post sit within the local authority management structure?	The library service in Blaenau Gwent is managed by Aneurin Leisure Trust and not the local authority. Funding Manager within the Trust, holds responsibility for the library service. This officer is a member of the trust. The Library Services Manager is line managed by the Contracts, Partnernships and Fundin
What is the post held by the most senior professional librarian (if different from the above)?	
Where does the post held by the most senior professional librarian sit within the local authority management structure (if different from the above)?	
Total staff working hours during the year	27,742
Number of staff hours spent in training & personal/professional development	280
% of time spent in training & personal/professional development	1.0%

This target has been met.

Total number of volunteers active during the year	9
Total number of volunteer working hours during the year	745
Do you have Investors in Volunteers accreditation relating to the NOS?	No

Briefly describe the training and support offered to volunteers.
Volunteers are managed and supported by a designated officer within the library establishment. They are included in training, when appropriate and all have a speciic 'role descriptions' . They have regular one-to-one updated with relevant communication, when appropriate. The Trust has a Volunteer Policy which is adhered to. All volunteer roles provide 'added value' to the service and do not replace any paid library roles. All volu

Authority comment:

WPLSQI 14 Operational expenditure	2022-23	% of total
Expenditure on staff	£473,750	70%
Total materials expenditure	£64,144	9%
Expenditure on maintenance, repair & replacement of equipment & buildings	£21,893	3%
Total other operational costs	£116,371	17%
Total revenue expenditure	£676,158	100%
Total revenue expenditure per 1,000 population	£10,093	
Total capital expenditure		
Total capital expenditure per 1,000 population		
Authority comment:		

WPLSQI 15 Cost per visit	2022-23	Ratio
Total revenue expenditure on staff & materials	£ 676,158.00	
Total income generated	£28,621.00	Income
Total number of visits to library premises during the year	139,638	
Total number of external visits to the library's web site during the year	11,744	£4.28 Cost per visit
Authority comment:		

WPLSQI 16 Opening hours (Comment on any change to provision since 2018-19)	2022-23	Per 1,000 pop'n
Aggregate annual opening hours for all service points	10,075	150
This target has been met.		
Total number of unstaffed opening hours for all service points	0	
Authority comment:		

% of total

Total hours of unplanned and emergency closure of static service points as a result of building failure or staff unavailability

0

Total planned opening hours of all static service points

8,900

0.00%

Total number of missed mobile library stops and home deliveries as a result of vehicle failure or staff unavailability

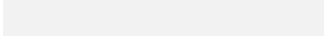
0

Total planned mobile library stops and home deliveries

3,150

0.00%

Authority comment:

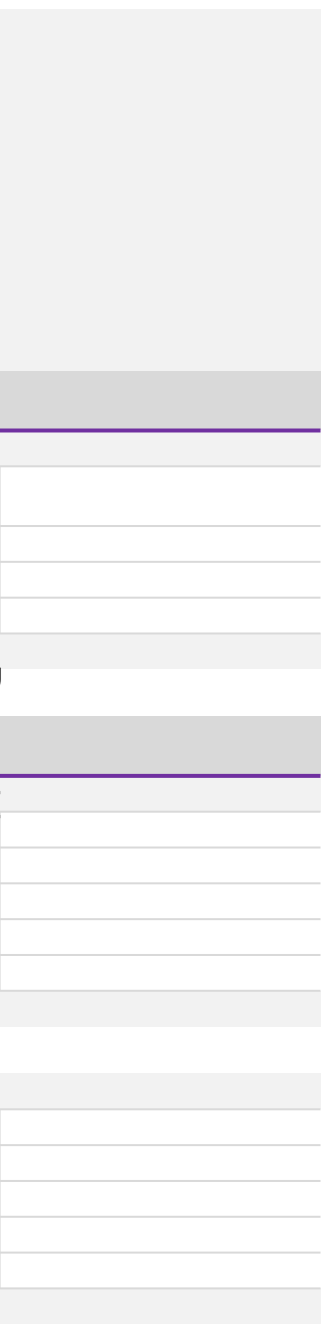


enjoyable, safe and inclusive
s helped them with the cost of
services, including refreshments.

--



The service has acknowledged a



2018-19

al literacy sessions.

2018-19

Page 45

ter, Welsh groups, Rummikub,
acial educational needs unit,

, and how this data is counted):

of fall per service. Council
to the community hubs which is
also seen an increase in the
?3. Usage in foofall has increased
115% increase compared to last
ted each month was 33% higher
libraries for information, activities,
such as active membership

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

pre Covid times, the number of
crease in the amount of users
ke it acknowledged that the 11%
ilities and services is planned for

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

ore not included in this QI. The
ould meet the standard of 15

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

nd customer service. The service
calculation. The Partnership,

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

red Librarian.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Page 48 The Contracts, Partnerships and
r of the senior management team
g

[Redacted]

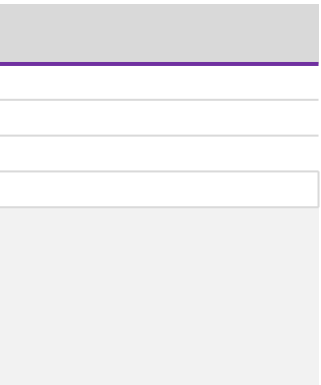
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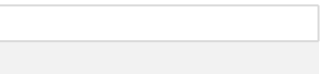
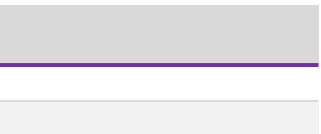
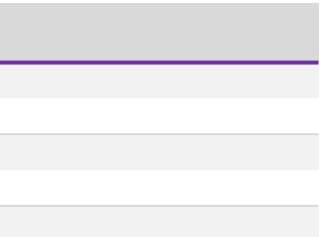
[Redacted]

one review sessions and are
unteers are recruited through a

[Redacted]



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Blaenau Gwent Libraries/Aneurin Leisure Trust

Instead of the case studies previously submitted, authorities are asked to submit one impact statement for their service. Good impact statements are expected to include evidence that the library service has made a positive difference to an individual (or group of individuals). This would normally go beyond a description of services provided and their use, to show the outcome, and may include testimony from the customers concerned provided you have their permission to include this. Individuals should not be named within the impact statement. The impact statement indicative length is 300 words.

-Yes (permission obtained) Names have been altered.

Regular Attendees from Warm Spaces

Our 'Warm Spaces' campaign was launched in Oct 2022, with all six libraries offering the scheme. We delivered it during the full opening hours of all the libraries and in addition to this, we held specific activities to encourage people to attend.

'The library has saved me so much money over the winter. I visit every day. I live alone, so I cannot afford to put the heating on in the day. Even boiling the kettle, I have to think twice about, so having a free hot drink has been very much appreciated. The library is warm, comfortable and just makes me happier, knowing I can socialise, just like being in a café, but without paying. It really lifts my mood. It provides me with company, stimulation and makes me feel part of whatever is going on. I've participated in craft session, Knit and Natter and Reminiscence sessions. Due to the cost-of-living crisis, I have had to end my Broadband contract, so having free Wi-fi and computers has been invaluable for me. The council hub has helped me claim the correct benefits and helped me with fuel vouchers. The Citizens Advice service in the library has also helped me with form filling. Last week I also had a warm pack given to me, which has been a great help. – Barbara

David started attending the Cuppa and Company sessions after losing his wife. He enjoys reading the newspaper, doing the crossword and having a friendly chat.

'I have been suffering with depression since my wife passed away, earlier this year. I lost my purpose and routine in life, after caring for her for many years, I felt lost. A neighbour suggested joining the coffee morning at the library. It has really helped, I pop in most mornings, have a coffee, do the crossword and a chat, and it sets me up for the day. It gets me out of the house, I've made some new friends and has given me back some routine in my life, - and I haven't got to spend a penny! Which is really important, being a pensioner living alone. I have also started reading again, which helps me relax in the evenings' – David.

'I lost my job in December and as a result I couldn't afford the rent on my flat. For a couple of weeks, I was sofa surfing with friends. The library was a sanctuary to me, a safe haven, I could use the wi-fi, have a free coffee, and had lots of support from agencies like Pobl, Llamau and Citizens Advice Bureau. I could stay as long as I liked, without the need to spend money. I also had help with CV and advice on training and education. Within a few weeks, my life changed completely. I found a new job and affordable flat. Without the library, I think I would have ended up on the streets!' – Jamie

Libraries Warm Spaces

All our libraries in Blaenau Gwent will be providing warm, welcome spaces for local residents this winter

FREE access to:

- FREE hot drinks
- FREE activities.
- FREE Wi-Fi access.
- Free computer access.
- Books, e-books, e-magazines & audiobooks.
- Community Hubs offering advice & support on Council services.

A warm welcome awaits you at your local library

www.aneurinleisure.org.uk

Contact your local library for more info

WELCOME
WEL WROGDD
WEL WROGDD

Llyfrgelloedd
Blaenau Gwent
Libraries

Aneurin leisure
Improving community life

Narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ensures that public bodies across Wales, including local authorities, think about the long-term, work better with communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

To achieve this, the Act puts in place 7 well-being goals:

- A globally responsive Wales
- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Clearly, the library service contributes to a number of these goals by supporting education and lifelong learning; promoting health and wellbeing; improving digital literacy; and providing access to culture and the Welsh language within some of the most deprived communities in Wales. The seven goals provide a clear vision that links the major themes of the service.

A Wales of Cohesive Communities

Supporting local residents with the cost-of-living crisis has been a key priority for the service over 22/23. This role has become more important over the year, as the effects of the crisis has impacted further on local residents. Library staff attended a number of cost of living events, within the community, raising awareness of how libraries can help. We designed a specific flyer to promote to the community and to share with partners.

**Llyfrgelloedd
Blaenau Gwent
Libraries**

How our libraries can help with the cost of living:

- FREE books, e-Books, e-Audio & e-Magazines.
- All our libraries are registered Warm Spaces.
- Our libraries are all fines FREE.
- FREE space to study, work and socialise.
- FREE access to Wi-Fi and computers.
- FREE access to charge your mobile devices.
- FREE hot drinks available for all visitors.
- Regular FREE activities for adults and children.
- Our Sports Libraries offer FREE loans of sports and exercise equipment.
- FREE tablet loan scheme.
- FREE data sim cards (needs assessment will apply).
- We provide access to Blaenau Gwent Council services and a wide range of support from other organisations including DWP, Pobl, Llamau and carers groups.

Abertillery 01495 355646 | Blaina 01495 290312 | Brynmawr 01495 357743
Cwm 01495 355605 | Ebbw Vale 01495 355055 | Tredegar 01495 357869

Aneurin Ieure
Improving community life

For more information on our libraries and services visit
www.aneurinleisure.org.uk

A new Citizens Advice Service was launched in Sept 22 with weekly drop-in sessions being delivered in all libraries. This, together with the council community hubs provides a ‘one stop shop’ approach to support local residents with a wide range of enquiries.

The service supported the Welsh Libraries ‘Living Well in Wales’ campaign by delivering sessions to bring people together, focusing on connecting and giving people a sense of belonging.

Examples of sessions held –

- Reminiscence sessions
- Coffee mornings
- Coffee Art Sessions
- Family History sessions
- Book launches
- Creative writing sessions

With the roll-out of the new Warm Spaces campaign in all libraries, this linked all our priorities and enabled us to reach out to the most vulnerable members of our communities.

A Healthier Wales

As Aneurin Leisure is a health and wellbeing trust, the focus for all sectors within the organisation is to improve health – *‘We are a community focussed organisation and believe passionately about making a positive impact to people’s lives by not only improving physical health and wellbeing, but also their mental and social wellbeing through our diverse range of services and facilities’*

Combating loneliness and improving health and wellbeing continued to be a priority for the service over 22/23. Feed-back from the community clearly demonstrated the need for physical events and activities. People expressed their need to enjoy the company of others whilst taking part in an engaging session. There has been a marked increase in the number of partner organisations accessing libraries over 22/23. The community support role has been further developed, with our reputation now firmly established as a welcoming space, fully inclusive and the ideal venue to engage with the local community.

Examples of partners accessing the service

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Pobl
- Communities for work
- Gwent Association of voluntary organisations
- Gwent Carers
- Grief Support Cymru
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- Llamau
- Gwent Family History Society
- Cymraeg i Blant
- Cyfannol Women’s Aid
- Blaenau Gwent food partnership
- Keep Wales Tidy
- Families First
- Disability Can do
- Volunteering Matters
- Prime Cymru
- DWP
- Gwent De-Fibbers Association
- U3A
- Welsh Water
- Platfform
- Inside Out Art for mental health

Our Sports Library which was launched last year has increased in popularity. A range of sports equipment are available for customers to borrow free of charge and items are issued on the LMS. Ukrainian families have expressed their gratitude of the scheme, with many joining local sports groups as a result.

Various health campaigns have been promoted over the year, for example, Mental Health Awareness Week in May 22.

The Reading well collections are regularly promoted and over the year a number of schools and community organisations have borrowed sets. Empathy Day was promoted in June, with related stock promotions and on-line digital activities.

Brynmawr and Tredegar Libraries are designated well-being hubs. We work in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board by promoting health and well-being activities and ensuring health information and stock is displayed in conjunction with themed events. Cuppa and Company sessions are held weekly, with the aim of encouraging social interaction and raising awareness of well-being.



A Prosperous Wales

The service has continued to support prosperity across the borough over 22/23. We have continued to develop our partnership work with the regeneration department to increase footfall into town centres, through supporting family events in the high street. We delivered events in libraries to linked to the themes of the events.

A new project was launched in Dec 2022, with the service hosting live music events with the aim of engaging with new audiences to library services. We worked with employability projects and local artists to inspire and motivate young people to embark on a career in the music industry. Library staff enrolled participants to the library and promoting relevant stock to them, including raising awareness of e-resources, e.g., music magazines.



ROCK AT THE LIBRARY
TALKS FROM INDUSTRY LEGENDS
Q&A SESSION WITH EXPERTS
LIVE PERFORMANCES

Are you a budding musician, sound tech, lighting engineer, film maker or just interested in breaking into the music & creative industries?
This event is for you!



6-8PM - FREE ENTRY
 ABERTILLERY & EBBW VALE LIBRARY
 MONDAY 5TH & TUESDAY 6TH DECEMBER






Support for jobseekers has continued to be a core aspect of library service provision. Our close working links with our colleagues in Adult Community Learning has enabled us to provide a wide range of learning opportunities delivered in their local library. This ranged for tailored one-to-one support, informal learning and classes. Clear referral routes are in place to signpost learners to more formal learning. Libraries continue to be the ‘first port of call’ for informal learning, particularly for digital needs. Staff are trained to encourage customers to progress with their learning and work with partners to facilitate this.

A More Equal Wales

A new member of staff from Abertillery Library has represented our service by being a member on the Anti-Racism steering group, commissioned by CILIP Cymru Wales. As a result of this, training will follow for all our library staff and have started reviewing our collections and stock policies. It will demonstrate our commitment to equality and will support our evolving communities. This work will align with the objectives of the WPLS and the Anti Racist Wales Action Plan.

Stock promotion is an important aspect for the service to raise awareness of equality. Pride Month and LGBT History Month was promoted in all libraries, with displays, with relevant titles promoted



To celebrate World Book Day in March 2023, the service worked in partnership with Families First, to provide children with free costumes. The costumes were loaned from local libraries, which worked well, with families joining the library at the same time and borrowing related stock. This scheme was particularly well received by families in need, many parents commenting how it helped them deal with the cost-of-living crisis.

WORLD BOOK DAY!

Families First are once again running our World Book Day project. We want to ensure ALL children are able to take part in the annual World Book Day event.

THURSDAY 2ND MARCH

Costumes and books will be available to browse and collect this year from Tredegar library or, alternatively, delivery can be arranged to your local library.

Costumes are limited and will be available on a first come first serve basis. The costume collection will be open for browsing from 3pm-5pm, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday.

DAY 1 - TUESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY / FINAL DAY - WEDNESDAY 1ST MARCH
Books & costumes to suit all ages between 2- 11yrs.

For more information please contact
Tredegar Library on 01495 357669 or
Families First on 01495 355584

The theme of free activities was a common thread across all our events, schemes and projects. The ‘Summer of Fun, Project Gadgeteers’ campaign was delivered alongside the Summer Reading Challenge with a wide range of children’s sessions held in all libraries.

Examples of activities

- Diffusion Art
- Slime Workshops
- Weekly STEM Craft sessions
- Balloon Rocket Workshops
- When Science meets art sessions
- Owl visits
- Potion Party
- Louby-Lou Inter-active storytelling
- Huw Davies Author Visit
- Malachy Doyle Author Visit
- Clay Modelling
- Recycling Art Sessions



The service has launched a new sim card project working with The Good Things Foundation and the National Data Bank to help bridge the digital divide.

National Databank - Good Things Foundation

This project supports our cost-of-living help for the community, offering data to those people in need. It links with another digital inclusion project we deliver, the loaning of free tablets. This enables us to provide a solution to those people who have no access to data. This offer has been a major development in the service, over the year, enabling us to prevent data poverty within the community.

A Resilient Wales

The service is committed to building stronger, more connected communities. We are able to adapt to change quickly and be responsive to local needs. As staff noticed an increasing number of users spending long period of time in the library, to avoid putting the heating on at home, the service reacted by providing a wide range of support. For example, we have seen an increase in the number of homeless people, as a result, we worked with partners to arrange weekly drop-in sessions by Pobl, with sessions specifically delivered for residents in need of housing support. Other agencies such as CAB, Council services, Platform and Llamau also delivered support through drop-in sessions in all libraries.

The MP, MS and the Police held a number of surgeries across all libraries, encouraging people to voice opinions and seek impartial information in safe, welcoming environments.

As Blaenau Gwent is already one of the most deprived areas of Wales, the emphasis on free services has become more important than ever. Being free continues to remove barriers to accessing the library. With the closure of the main council offices (Civic Centre) and the transition to all face-to-face council enquiries now being delivered at libraries, through the provision of community hubs, this has encompassed library buildings as being the 'go-to' venue for anyone in need. Residents access libraries for food bank referrals, fuel vouchers and general cost of living advice. The local health board has provided the service with a range of free items to support people in need, for example period products and warm packs. All libraries have a 'free' area, for the community to take, without asking.

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

A new Welsh club has been established at Abertillery Library to encourage Welsh learners to practice conversational Welsh. A range of new Welsh language learning resources have been purchased over the year, including Welsh board games.



Welsh Baby Yoga is delivered weekly at Tredegar Library and number of Welsh Baby Rhyme time sessions have been delivered across the service. We have strong links with Cymraeg I Blant, helping us support many families through the medium of Welsh.

We have regularly promoted Welsh language audio books over the year and supported the North Wales Society for the Blind by committing a percentage of our allocated Welsh spend for this area.

There are various groups that use the free library space for cultural sessions. For example, the Blaina Aberystroth History and Archaeological Society holds weekly sessions in Blaina Library. The service has strong partnership links with Gwent Family Society. Volunteers from this organisation deliver regular help desks in all libraries, promoting FindMyPast and Ancestry.com. The Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum holds monthly meetings at Tredegar Library and utilises the local studies resources based there. Blaina Heritage Centre is based in the same building as Blaina Library, which provides an ideal link to work jointly on shared Welsh cultural activities. Likewise, a community Museum is based in Tredegar Library. Which attracts many visitors researching the birth place of Aneurin Bevan, plus other historical information. Library staff and volunteers from the museum work together to provide a range of information and resources to promote Welsh culture.

The service works closely with the Welsh Books Council, taking advice on new Welsh language titles, including new titles by Welsh authors. Welsh stock is routinely promoted in all libraries and through our on-line platforms.

A Globally Responsive Wales

Over the year we linked with the Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership to deliver the 'Little Veg Library'. Each veg library includes 'pick and mix' pots filled with different seeds as well as envelopes that families can fill with seeds of their choice to take home. The idea is for people to have a go at growing some veg at home in response to the recent food shortages and spiralling food prices.

The service continues to be the main distribution hub for food recycling bags in the borough. The Keep Wales Tidy litter picking scheme, which was launched in 2022, links closely with raising awareness of environmental issues and encourages residents to be responsible for keeping areas free from litter.

The service works closely with all other library authorities in Wales on joint initiatives. The book purchasing consortia, the All Wales Library Management system and regional inter-lending schemes provide considerable cost savings and improves the efficiency of the service. The very basics of book borrowing is an environmentally friendly way of reducing the carbon footprint.

In Jan 2023 all libraries raised awareness of Holocaust Memorial Day. We marked the 'one day' encouraging communities to come together to learn from the holocaust and genocides for a better future.

.

Please provide a short statement about the future direction and plans for the library service (indicative length 200 words).

The plan to re-locate Abertillery Library to a new town centre location will continue to be a main focus for the service over 23/24. We are continuing to work closely with the regeneration department to secure additional funding which if successful, will secure the

plans to transform Trinity Chapel, into a modern, vibrant library and community adult education centre.

Funding has been secured to recruit two new library development officers from the Skills Priority Funding stream. The recruitment process is planned for the summer of 2023. The post holders will have targets to achieve linked to performance in the WPLS, particularly on active membership and footfall.

A review of the ICT provision is planned for 23/24. This is following feed-back from the recent user surveys and an acknowledgment of the changing patterns of usage. The growing trend of BYOD by users and partners requires us to investigate an improved Wi-Fi solution, to meet the diverse needs of the community, including streaming, video conferencing etc.

Priority on the health and wellbeing agenda will encompass the increasing range of services that our libraries will deliver over 23/24. This agenda is strongly endorsed by Aneurin Leisure Trust as the ethos that is common to all elements of service delivery of the Trust. *‘We are a community focussed organisation and believe passionately about making a positive impact to people’s lives by not only improving physical health and wellbeing, but also their mental and social wellbeing through our diverse range of services and facilities’.*

We will continue to work closely with the local authority, ensuring we prioritise services that contribute to local and national government agendas. We will build upon the success of the community hub provision to expand our pro-active approach to partnership work. We will continue to build upon our strong reputation within the community, that our libraries have emerged from the pandemic, stronger, more resilient, and more pivotal than ever before.

Agenda Item 8

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Partnership Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **22nd February 2024**
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 9th May 2024**
Portfolio Holder: **All Portfolios**
Report Submitted by: **Scrutiny and Democratic Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	12.02.24			22.02.24			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present to Members the Partnership Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 9th May 2024 for discussion and agreement.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
 - 2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in October 2023, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
 - 2.5 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a quarterly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 9th May 2024, and
 - Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;
 - Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and

- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting 9th May 2024, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 9th May 2024

Partnership Scrutiny Committee
Forward Work Programme

Dates	Topic	Purpose	Lead	Other meeting date
Meeting: Thursday 9 th May 2024	Gwent Archive	Performance Monitoring To ensure members have oversight of Governance Arrangements and monitor performance and to support the delivery plan for 2023/24.	Sarah King / Lisa Snook Torfaen	
Deadline: Thursday 24 th April 2024	Gwent Crematorium	Performance Monitoring To ensure members have oversight of Governance Arrangements and monitor performance and to support the delivery plan for 2023/24.	Sarah King	

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