Scoping a New Future for Welsh Public Libraries

Contents

I. Executive Summary

1. This Report outlines recent research and investigations into the changing position of public library service delivery in Wales. It also reviews evidence from national and international developments to outline a future model for the sustainable management and delivery of public library service to meet the needs of the people of Wales. Finally, it attempts to distil the key actions which would need to progress such a model.

2. It is intended that these key actions would form the basis for a roadmap to identify how the Welsh public library service would contribute to the successful delivery of co-located community service hubs, underpinned by a national digital public library service. The successful implementation of such an approach will require commitment at the local, regional and national level to the premise that public library services have an essential role in the strategic delivery of community services, lifelong learning, digital information, literacy and inclusion, and community cohesion.

3. The Report concludes that there are 4 elements to the establishment of a more resilient public library service in Wales – co-located community hubs, regional delivery consortia, a national digital library service and a workforce strategy. The central element being a local network of community hubs underpinned by a national digital library service. Local delivery would be managed through a maximum of 4 regional consortia - North Wales, South West and Mid Wales, South Wales Central and South Wales East which would also take responsibility for workforce strategies. Where smaller libraries are transferred to community management, local government support should be provided as outlined in the Guidance issued by the Welsh Government in 2015.

4. The implementation of this innovative approach would build on the recommendations of the Welsh Government Expert Review of Welsh Public Libraries (2014) and the National Assembly for Wales Community, Equality and Local Government Committee Inquiry (2014), as well as recent research. It would also continue to measure statutory service delivery using the Welsh Public Library Standards Framework.

5. Recent enquiries and investigations into public library services have reiterated the widely-held view that libraries contribute to a range of national and local government priorities such as social inclusion, digital inclusion and assisting people into work – all contributing to tackling poverty. Above all libraries contribute to improving literacy, especially promoting the love of reading amongst children. Research carried out by the University of London identified that:

   "Reading for pleasure is a more important indicator of future success than any socio-economic factor. ... The combined effect on children's progress of reading books often, going to the library regularly and reading newspapers at

16 was four times greater than the advantage children gained from having a parent with a degree".[1]

6. Public libraries have an important role to play in supporting citizens to be able to benefit from digital technology through free access to the Internet and the help and support of library staff. Libraries are central to initiatives in Wales to assist people to access public services that are primarily delivered online such as Universal Credit and Universal JobMatch.

    "Throughout Wales, libraries provide the backbone of internet access for those who can't afford broadband in their own homes. And these days the internet provides one of the best ways out of poverty". [Cathryn Marcus, Project Director Communities 2.0 Digital Inclusion Project]

7. The need to implement a new approach for the management and delivery of public library services was identified by the Expert Review of Welsh Public Libraries (2014). The Review concluded:

    "… that unless there was a step-change in the level of collaboration between local authorities, the Welsh Government and other stakeholders to work together to address the practical challenges and the financial imperative, public library provision in Wales will be irreparably damaged and will no longer be able to address local community needs."[2].

8. New collaborative models of public service delivery are at the heart of the *Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery* report (2012), which examined new spatial arrangements for public services delivery. The challenge facing both national and local government is to devise a new model for public library service delivery which acknowledges the benefits of the shared cost model in delivering services across Wales.

9. The Report reviews the evidence for management models including maintaining delivery by 22 library services, a single national model and a regional consortium model. It concludes that an agreement to form 4 regional consortia to support local delivery should be considered for further discussion, i.e. North Wales, Mid and South West Wales, South Wales Central and South Wales East. Under this model, the statutory responsibility to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' public library service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (the Act) would remain with each individual local authority. However the existing Act allows local authorities to enter into collaborative agreements with other local authorities and trusts to deliver the public library service.

[1] Institute of Education. (2013). *Reading for pleasure.* Available from: http://www.ioe.ac.uk/newsEvents/89938.html.

[2] Welsh Government. (2014). *The Expert Review of Public Libraries in Wales 2014.* Available at: http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/141021libraries-review-report-en.pdf

10. The structure and governance of regional collaboration are reviewed, including the lead local authority model and the potential for regional trusts. The process acknowledges the potential complexity of the recent establishment of multi-service trusts at the local level; however the statutory duty under the existing Act continues to remain with the local authority even where trusts have been established. Therefore the local authority should continue to have a central role in any discussion on governance issues for the proposed regional consortia.

11. The Report also reviews existing regional consortia for the delivery of Archives Services and Educational Improvement Consortia in Wales to identify best practice in relation to governance and financial management.

12. The time scale for the implementation of a new approach is reviewed and this is considered a matter of urgency. The risks of inaction are highlighted in the context of declining budgets in each local authority to deliver a public library service, leading to an increasingly inconsistent service delivery to people across Wales. It is proposed that action should begin as soon as agreement is reached to deliver user benefits and a more resilient framework. As noted above, with agreement, this model can be progressed without new legislation to replace the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Work on costing a new model should be continued, taking advantage of the collaborative work being undertaken as part of the roll-out of the new library management system fro Wales.

13. Recent reports have identified some of the drawbacks of the 1964 Act. It is acknowledged that any new legislation would require at least 3 years to be introduced, however discussion should continue on the perceived benefits of replacing the current Act.

II. Introduction

Aim of the Report

14   This Report aims to build on the recommendations of the *Welsh Government Expert Review of Welsh Public Libraries (2014),* the National Assembly for Wales' Community, Equality and Local Government Committee Inquiry *Public Libraries In Wales (2014*) and recent research to form the basis for an innovative new approach to the sustainable delivery of public library services in Wales. In doing so, it attempts to distil the key actions which would need to be progressed if a new paradigm for the sustainable management and delivery of library services is to be agreed.

15.   It is intended that these actions would form the basis for identifying how the reinvigorated Welsh public library service would contribute to the successful delivery of community services, lifelong learning, digital information literacy and inclusion, and community cohesion. The successful implementation of such an approach will require commitment at the local, regional and national level.

16.   The Expert Review on Welsh Public Libraries recommended that:

> X   *The Welsh Government should work with the WLGA and local authorities to progress the following strategic actions:*
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> a) *greater collaboration on a more extensive scale between authorities as an immediate priority*
> b) *to develop library services in-line with any future model for local government in Wales, as an ongoing committment*
> c) *the necessity to develop a regional or national consortium approach to the delivery of public library services in the medium-term (3-5 years), to be facilitated by a suitably funded organisation supported by the Welsh Government*
> d) *the creation of a nationally co-ordinated library service for Wales as the ultimate goal.*

Potential Contribution to Strategic Delivery

17.   The *Expert Review* emphasised the role of public libraries as cultural and educational hubs at the heart of our communities. The important role of public libraries in providing free access to resources is even greater in a period of austerity as families and individuals face increasing challenges. People need access to high quality impartial information, resources and assistance to enable them to take informed decisions; including practical help to get people back into work and enhance their quality of life. In a recent survey carried out by the Carnegie UK Trust, 76% of Welsh people said a library was essential or very

important to their community[3].

18.	The Carnegie UK Trust's *Speaking Volumes: the impact of public libraries on wellbeing project*[4], identified the beneficial outcomes of public library services on people's lives. Encouraging children to visit their local libraries at a young age and enjoy reading has a lasting impact:

> *"Reading for pleasure is a more important indicator of future success than any socio-economic factor. Research for the Institute of Education at the University of London found that children who read for pleasure made more progress in maths, vocabulary and spelling between the ages of 10 and 16 than those who rarely read. Reading for pleasure was found to be more important for children's cognitive development between ages 10 and 16 than their parents' level of education. The combined effect on children's progress of reading books often, going to the library regularly and reading newspapers at 16 was four times greater than the advantage children gained from having a parent with a degree".*[5]

19.	In 2002, the People's Network (funded by the National Lottery) introduced free access to computers, software and broadband Internet access in public libraries across the whole of Wales. Ever since, public libraries have been at the forefront of promoting digital inclusion. They provide free access to the increasing number of public services that are delivered primarily online and public libraries also develop people's information handling skills to ensure that they can benefit from these services. Being able to access and use services such as Universal Credit and Universal JobMatch is critical to the lives of the poor and the vulnerable in our communities.

> *"There is increasing social exclusion - the information society is a challenge for people without the necessary skills".*
> (Roly Keating, Chief Executive, British Library)

20.	The role of public libraries in promoting digital inclusion and tackling poverty was highlighted by Cathryn Marcus, Project Director of the Communities 2.0 Digital Inclusion Project:

> *"Throughout Wales, libraries provide the backbone of internet access for those who can't afford broadband in their own homes. And these days the internet provides one of the best ways out of poverty. You can't search for a job unless you're online; if you're online you can access money saving*

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[3] Carnegie UK Trust. (2012). *A New Chapter: Public Libraries in the 21st Century.* Available from: http://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2012/a-new-chapter

[4] Carnegie UK Trust. (2014). *Speaking Volumes: the impact of public libraries on wellbeing project.* Available from: http://tinyurl.com/pndczc3

[5] Sullivan, A and Brown, M. (2013). *Reading for Change – Performance and Engagement Across Countries*: *Results from PISA 2000,* OECD 2002. UCL. Available from: http://www.ioe.ac.uk/newsEvents/89938.html

*websites; shopping online is cheaper; skyping your relatives costs nothing. Tackling poverty? Our libraries do it every day. If they weren't there, we'd have to invent them"*.[6]
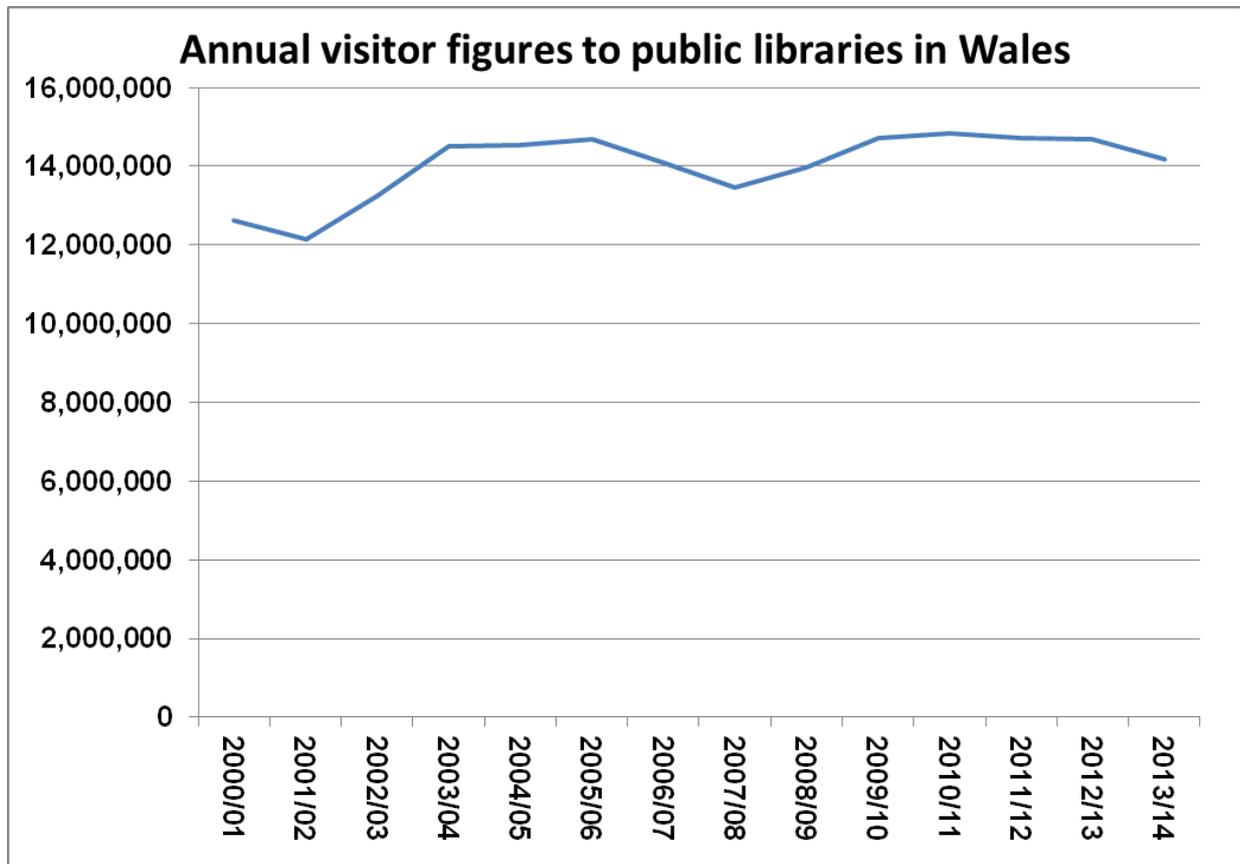
21. According to statistics published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, a comparison between 2012-13 and 2013-14 shows that there has been a plateauing and a slight decline in the number of physical visits to libraries. During the same period, there was a slight decline in the number of public library service points and the expenditure per head on public libraries has plateaued. The continuing impact of financial pressures on public library services is demonstrated by the data contained in the Welsh Public Library Standards annual returns for 2014/15 which confirms that formerly strongly performing library services are feeling the effects of decreasing budgets. However, in comparison to the situation in other UK home nations, strategic investment by the Welsh Government, working with local authorities, has ensured that usage and the number of library users has been largely maintained over recent years.

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[6]Communities 2.0. (2013). *Communities 2.0 Blog Tackling Poverty Fortnight – Libraries: Creating opportunities across mediums – Opinion.* http://tinyurl.com/plqovq5. (Source no longer available).

Total Revenue Expenditure per 1000 resident population
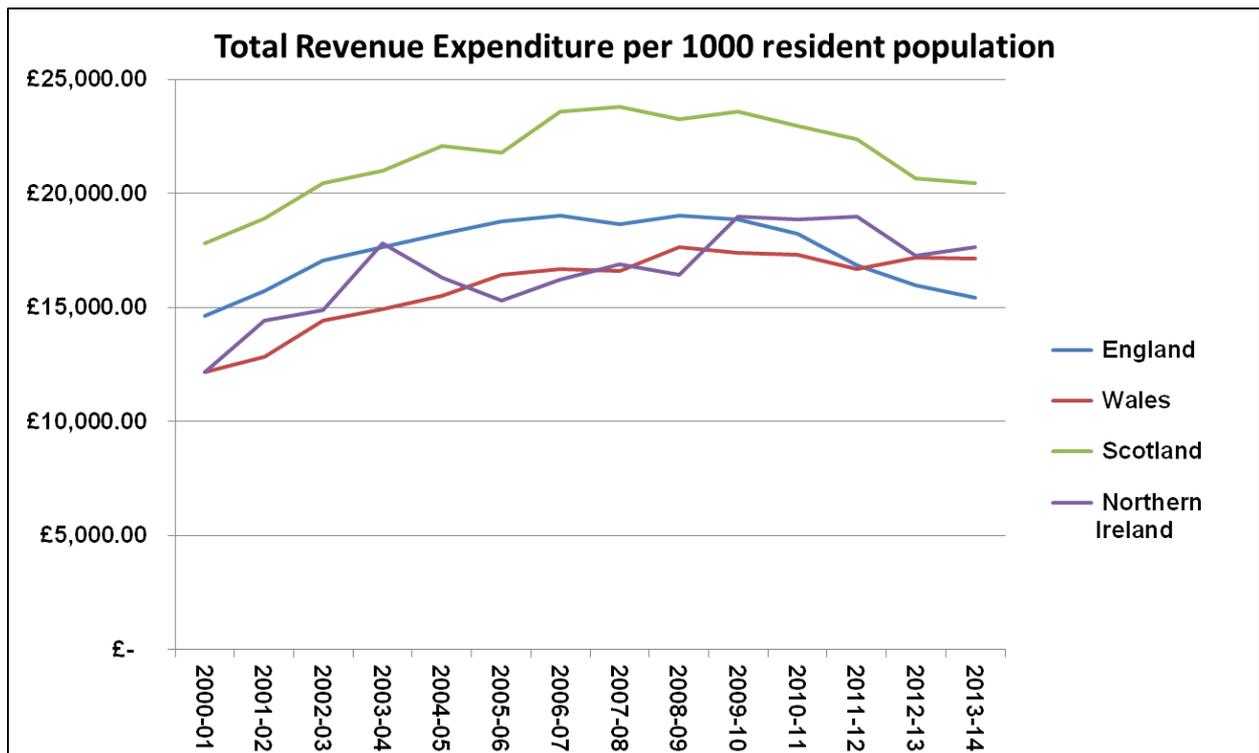
Importance of Workforce Development

22. More than half of all public library expenditure is spent on staff. UK library statistics show that circa 60% of public library revenue expenditure is spent on staffing costs and it is essential that the public obtain the best value from this significant investment. Research carried out by Twelfth Man in developing a *National Marketing Strategy (2006-2011)*[7] for Welsh libraries found that: *Staff are the singularly most vital aspect of the library user experience.*

23. The Expert Review outlined a number of additional historical issues and impacts of recent changes on staffing and staffing structures, including:

   - *Following the reorganisation of local government in 1996 into smaller authorities, there has been a general movement away from the employment of specialist staff with a wide range of subject expertise to a greater generalisation with individual staff expected to cover a number of subject areas*
   - *The public library staffing structure within local authorities has become increasingly flat as a result of staff restructuring, leading to:*
   - *a lack of opportunities for progression and for developing future leaders*
   - *the library profession being less attractive to new entrants compared to other professions*
   - *the de-skilling of professional posts*

24. Any further introduction of community managed libraries only staffed by and skilled library staff to assist the public with their needs if the relationship with

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[7]Twelfth Man. (2005). *National Marketing Strategy (2006-2011)*. Available from: MALD

the local authority is not clearly defined.

25. The most recent Welsh Public Library Standards overall analysis report[8] indicated that only five out of 22 library authorities met the standard on public library staffing in 2013-14. The current unplanned nature of the staff reductions as public library funding is reduced is resulting in skill shortages in some local authorities as posts are deleted. Any new service delivery model will need to address the need for a resilient workforce plan which retains professional skills and provides vocational progression routes.

The Impact of Modernising Public Libraries

26. Evidence from the Welsh Government's Community Learning Libraries programme highlights the impact that modernising library buildings has had on co-locating services, visits and loans:
    - Bridgend: a 39% increase in the number of children's books issued following its re-opening;
    - Caerau and Ely Hub: it delivers a range of council and other public services integrated with the library service in a modern and attractive environment;
    - Prestatyn: an excellent example of creating a vibrant community hub with a flexible space. This enables a range of services to be delivered via the library, e.g. Citizens Advice Bureaux;
    - Caerphilly: Almost 20,000 visits were made to the new Caerphilly Library in the first month after opening (compared to almost 7,000 in month to the old library);
    - Pontycymmer: The re-location of the library to the leisure centre at Pontycymmer led to an increase in library opening hours from 17 hours to 61.5 hours a week.

27. Two of the major successes of the Community Learning Libraries Programme have been to attract more children to use libraries and also create flexible and attractive spaces to increase the number of community activities taking place in the libraries. In particular, the modernised libraries are attracting new partners, such as Flying Start, to use the new facilities to deliver information, cultural and educational services. The partnership between the Welsh Government and local authorities to join every Year 4 child to a library by 2016 provides a basis for co-production between schools and library services to boost literacy levels.

28. The continued need for the physical library space is supported by evidence from the Higher Education sector. The McClay Library, Queens University Belfast won the SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries) Design Award in 2013. However since it opened, more reader/study spaces and group/collaborative spaces have been required despite an increase

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[8] Welsh Government. (2014). *An overall analysis of the performance of the Welsh public library authorities.* Available from: http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/141209framework4-report-en.pdf

in the use of online services and the high level of use of self-service facilities. This has meant the relocation of some staff areas to alternative buildings to increase study spaces.

29.   Research carried out for Archives, Libraries and Museums Alliance UK (ALMA-UK) underlines the value of financial investment in public libraries. Their report[9] demonstrated that:

- *users of libraries place the following values on library services per visit: £24.10 in Scotland; £26.38 in Wales; and £27.27 in Northern Ireland.*
- *in 2012-13 the libraries supported 1,296 jobs in Scotland, 596 jobs in Wales and 327 in jobs in Northern Ireland over and above those directly employed by the service* (1,168.8 directly employed in Wales).
- *for every £1 spent on providing the service* (in Wales), *57 pence is generated within local supply chains through expenditure on local goods and services.*

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[9]Archives, Libraries and Museums Alliance UK. (2014). *The Report on the Economic Value of Library Services.* Available from: http://tinyurl.com/q4fc7bj

III. The Current Model of Public Library Service Delivery

30. There are currently 22 public library authorities in Wales with the public library service primarily delivered by the local authority itself. Around 250 library service points are maintained with additional mobile library provision, particularly for services to housebound users. To date, two local authorities have transferred their public library services to trusts. However a number of local authorities are in the process of reviewing their public library service with the intention of forming trusts to manage services.

31. Four local authorities across Wales have transferred around 13 small libraries to the local community to avoid their closure with staffing provided mainly by volunteers. This has raised the issue of whether such small community-managed libraries should be included within the statutory provision of public library services. The Welsh Government has issued guidance on whether community managed libraries should form part of the statutory provision based on the Welsh Public Library Standards core entitlements - *Guidance on Community Managed Libraries and the Statutory Provision of Public Library Services in Wales*[10].

Statutory Duty

32. Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964[11] 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". The responsibility for implementing the Act in Wales has been devolved to the Welsh Government and it is currently the duty of the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism to "superintend and promote" the improvement of public library services in Wales.

33. Since 2002, the Welsh Government has administered the Welsh Public Library Standards (the Standards) in frameworks of three-year cycles. The Standards monitor the local authority's public library provision as part of the Minister's statutory requirement to superintend public libraries. The most recent review of local authorities' compliance with the Standards noted that the average number of Standards being met by all authorities in 2013-14 was 6.5 out of 9; the highest number achieved was 9, and the lowest 4.

34. Since 2005, the Welsh Government has delivered a national Libraries Development Strategy in partnership with local authorities, HE, FE and health libraries. The priorities of the current *Libraries Inspire* strategy are to:
    - work together to review existing models of service delivery in response to the current economic climate, and develop new innovative models of

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[10] Welsh Government. (2015). *Guidance on Community Managed Libraries and the Statutory Provision of Public Library Services in Wales.* Available from: http://tinyurl.com/p8h778p

[11] Her Majesty's Stationery Office. (1964). *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.* Available from: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75

delivery;

- develop partnership working in procuring and improving access to resources, including new online services such as e-books;
- modernise public library buildings to meet the changing needs of their users;
- maximise the contribution of libraries in developing people's skills to help everyone reach their potential, reduce inequality, and improve economic and social well-being;
- invest in developing the skills of library staff;
- implement a co-ordinated audience development programme across Wales to enrich the lives of individuals and communities; and
- ensure the provision of a high quality service through initiatives such as the Welsh Public Library Standards.

Recent Surveys of Users and Non-Users

35. The most recent comprehensive survey of library users and non-users was carried out by IPSOS Mori for the Carnegie UK Trust. The research report, entitled *A New Chapter - Public Library Services in the 21st Century*[12], was published in 2012. This report reviewed the situation in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland and provides a useful benchmark as the omnibus survey was carried out in a consistent manner in each of the nations. A total of 1,018 adults aged 16 and over were surveyed in Wales.

36. The Carnegie UK Trust produced a summary factsheet of Welsh data (available online) on attitudes to and use of public library service[13]. The results for Wales demonstrated that:

- over three quarters (77%) of people in Wales said that libraries were very important or essential to their community;
- 45% of those surveyed had used a public library in the previous 12 months;
- frequent users were more likely to be working part-time, not be working or be retired, than they were to be working full-time;
- despite the fact that those in social group E were least likely to have visited a library in the last 12 months, those that had done so were most likely to say that they visited their local library 'at least once a week' (30%), whereas those in social groups AB and C were the least likely 'to have visited at least once a week' (18% and 17% respectively); and
- there was a statistically significant, positive relationship between the

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[12] Carnegie UK Trust. (2012). *A New Chapter: Public library services in the 21st century*. Available from: http://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2012/a-new-chapter

[13] Carnegie UK Trust. (2012).*A New Chapter: Public library services in the 21st century – Welsh data about attitudes to and use of public libraries*. Available from: http://carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2012/a-new-chapter---wales-factsheet

frequency of library use and being a prolific reader who lived in an urban area in Wales.

Position in 2015

37.   Budgetary pressures on local authorities are increasing and it is highly likely that substantial cuts will be made to public library service budgets for the financial year 2016-2017. The probable impact will include,
- a significant number of library closures
- an increase in the number of smaller libraries being transferred to community management with resulting variable levels of provision
- continued transfer of local authority library services to trusts
- a reduction in paid staffing, especially library staff with professional qualifications
- a reduction in expenditure on resources such as books and multimedia resources
- it will be increasingly difficult for local authorities to maintain their performance against the Standards

38.   The current position therefore suggests that a new approach should be considered which makes better use of declining financial resources to maintain a high quality public library service in Wales that will be agile in meeting changing user requirements.

IV. Establishing the Basis for Future Delivery

Demographic and Economic Trends

39. In considering new models of public library service delivery for the future, it is necessary to consider the likely requirements from public library services. Key demographic and socio-economic factors which may influence future user requirements and service are outlined in *Understanding Wales' Future*[14].

40. Wales' population is projected to increase to 3.19 million by 2022 from 3.06 (2011). Overall the numbers of children and of people aged 65 years and over are set to increase by 2% and by 50% respectively between 2012 and 2037. The number of people between 16 and 64 years of age is set to decrease by 3% during the same period. These predicted trends underline the need to continue to develop children's services and support the health and well-being, and positive use of leisure time for people over 65 years. Both are traditionally heavy users of public libraries.

Meeting People's Needs

41. Fundamental to any new model of public library service for the 21st century will be to build it around people's needs and to aim to enhance social, cultural, education and economic well-being. Recent surveys and research highlighted that people still want public libraries to provide:
    - free local access to resources and information in various formats to meet the diverse needs of the public
    - safe and neutral space at the heart of the community
    - knowledgeable staff to assist users
    - a range of free activities in libraries and out in the communities
    - a venue to access other services

42. A survey carried out by Scotinform as part of an independent evaluation of *Libraries Inspire* identified that 82% of respondents used the library to borrow books. This highlights one of the challenges for public libraries, which is to balance the changing demands between print and electronic resources.
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43. The major trend/change in the last decade has been the provision of computer hardware, broadband and Wi-Fi Internet access. Equally important to providing access to these services is the need to develop people's ICT skills to take full advantage of the benefits of being online. As well as providing a challenge to the public libraries as more people access information and resources online, this trend also provides opportunities for libraries:
    - There is an ongoing role for library staff as trusted intermediaries to online information

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[14] Welsh Government. (2012). *Understanding Wales' Future*. Available from: http://tinyurl.com/pfuqcb5

- The delivery of public services such as Universal JobMatch and Universal Credit has highlighted an ongoing role for public libraries in developing people's ICT skills, providing assisted access to services and tackling digital exclusion
- Co-ordinating the disparate range of e-services provided by public libraries into an integrated and attractive digital library offer
- Social media provides low-cost more targeted opportunities to market public library services
- The ability to create online communities such as reading groups
- The public library can create and publish their own information resources.

44. Public libraries in Wales have responded to the advent of online services with the introduction of a range of resources co-ordinated by the National Library of Wales with the assistance of lead local authorities, in particular Neath Port Talbot. They include online newspapers, reference, family history, e-books, e-zines and e-audio resources. Whilst usage of online services is predicted to continue to increase significantly in the forthcoming years with the introduction of new services and increased access to mobile technology, visiting the library building to borrow books, use computers, attend activities and obtain information is likely to continue to be the main reasons for using/visiting public library services.

45. The Carnegie Trust UK user survey identifies that the four factors which would be most likely to increase their use of the public library service in Wales were:
- Providing better information on services
- Being able to reserve books online
- Improving the range and quality of books
- Providing other council services in library buildings.

46. Research commissioned by Archives, Libraries, Museums Alliance UK demonstrated that 55% of public library users travelled to their local public library by foot and 65% do not spend anything on travel. This consideration is especially important in areas of deprivation where the ability/costs of travel to their nearest public library are major factors.

47. New self service facilities provide opportunities to streamline the delivery of book services. This is a major strand of Libraries NI's latest roll-out of self-service technology in public libraries in Northern Ireland and is central to the development of the Open Libraries initiative to enable public access to a library outside normal opening hours in Denmark and which is also now being piloted in the Republic of Ireland.

Library Workforce – Changing Roles

48. The changes outlined above and the new range of skills which staff will require in the future as services evolve sets a real challenge for ensuring the

development of a motivated and skilled workforce to deliver the public library of the future. In order to address these issues, and also to prepare for the likely restructuring of local government following the recommendations of the Commission's report, there is a need for a new Workforce Development Plan. The Society of Chief Librarians Wales has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to develop a detailed plan by December 2015 to include:

- the development of a clear career path
- ensuring that relevant training courses (vocational and academic) are available to obtain appropriate qualifications at all career stages
- an on-going programme of training events
- the provision of leadership and management skills for library managers
- financial support via bursaries to complete training courses.

Co-located Services and Shared Buildings

49.   An analysis of trends indicates that public library buildings will have a continuing and evolving role at the heart of the public library service as creative, cultural and educational community hubs. As a result:

- The interior design of the library will increasingly need to be flexible with spaces where libraries can deliver a wide programme of activities including working in partnership with other agencies.
- There is an increasing trend to co-locate other public services alongside library services in a shared facility.
- There will be a continued demand for libraries to provide a quiet study space for individual and group study.

50.   The Carnegie research stated that, "*Providing other council services in library buildings*" was one of the four main factors that would encourage people to visit their library and strongly suggests the need for co-located facilities. The Welsh Governments' Community Learning Libraries programme has played a central role in the promotion of co-located services and the programme is key to the continuing transformation of public library buildings in Wales. To date, the programme has assisted in modernising around 100 out of the c.250 public library service points in Wales.

Small Community Managed Libraries

51.   A report, *Independent Trusts and Community Managed Libraries*[15] commissioned by the Welsh Government in 2015 has been completed by Prof Hywel Roberts. This report outlined the experience of Welsh local authorities in Conwy, Neath Port Talbot, Ceredigion and Rhondda Cynon Taf in establishing community managed libraries in small delivery points which faced closure. The report identified the key elements in managing the relationship between the community-managed library and the local authority including the provision of the book stock, ICT support and professional support.

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[15] Roberts, D Hywel E. (2015). *Independent Trust and Community Managed Libraries.* Available from: http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/150211-independent-trusts-community-libraries-en.pdf

52. Prof Roberts' study formed the basis for recently issued guidance[16] by the Welsh Government on whether community managed libraries should be included within the statutory provision based on the Welsh Public Library Standards core entitlements. This guidance has been accepted by the WLGA as a way of providing consistency of approach across Wales (*Guidance on Community Managed Libraries and the Statutory Provision of Public Library Services in Wales, 2015).*

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[16] Welsh Government. (2015). *Guidance on Community Managed Libraries and the Statutory Provision of Public Library Services in Wales.* Available from: *http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/150522community-managed-libraries-en.pdf*

V.   A New Approach for Welsh Public Library Services

What should be delivered?

53.   Across Wales, people expect, and are entitled to, accessible community services. This is reflected in the outcomes based approach adopted for the fifth framework of Welsh Public Library Standards, *Libraries Making a Difference (2014-2017)*[17]. Welsh public libraries will meet the 18 Core Entitlements which include:
   - provide services by friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff
   - provide a range of activities to support learning, enjoyment and enable users to obtain the maximum benefit from the available resources
   - provide access to a range of services and resources to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, and community participation in a wide range of formats, including those in the Welsh language
   - be free to join and be open to all members of their communities
   - provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable opening hours
   - provide information resources for individuals and groups with special needs
   - lend books for free and to deliver free access to information, including 24 access to online information resources
   - provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi and enable a single online search of all Welsh library resources
   - promote libraries to attract more people to benefit from their services and regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs
   - work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh libraries
   - provide a clear, timely and transparent complaints process if things go wrong.

(See Appendix 1 for the full list.)

A Sustainable Network of Co-located Local Community Hubs

54.   However, public libraries increasingly deliver their services in partnership with other agencies. Therefore, in progressing any new model, public libraries should be managed as community hubs where a range of community services are accessible in one location. In his report, *Independent Trust and Community Libraries in Wales*, Prof Roberts stated that,

> … *"a dispassionate analysis would suggest that the pattern of public library provision had not properly undergone radical re-appraisal or rationalisation in*

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[17]Welsh Government. (2014). *Libraries Making a Difference*. Available from:
http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/140425wpls5en.pdf

many areas following local government reorganisation in 1974 and 1996 when former independent library authorities were merged or redistributed, thus creating a situation where library service points formerly managed by a number of library authorities were sometimes very close together and their catchment areas overlapped. Some aspects of provision, particularly the location of static service points, did not respond to demographic changes as they occurred between and within communities".

55. The network of local public libraries is currently being reviewed by local authorities across Wales using a variety of criteria and will result in an increasingly inconsistent level of provision. In developing a new model for public library delivery in Wales it is essential that the provision of co-located community hubs is based on a clear analysis of need and criteria. One of the most successful models adapted and developed in Wales forms part of Caerphilly CBC's library strategy. Caerphilly used the following criteria to identify the type of library and resources which would be provided for the community. The criteria included:

- Population
- Deprivation
- Key demographic patterns based on age groups for 0-14, 16-19 and over 60
- Performance of library branches based on visits and loans per hour.

56. A formula based on the above criteria was used to produce an overall weighted score that identified a band/tier for the library. The following 4 bands were used by Caerphilly to outline the type of library provision.

Category of Library	Facilities
Portal / Hub	- Population in excess of 14,000 - Library located in main shopping centre - Floor space in metres square (400m^2 to 1000m^2) - Coffee shop or vending facility - Minimum of 25,000 items of stock in wide variety of formats. Inclusion of specialist collections e.g. – Family, Local History, Health & Well-being, Reading Group sets, and School/Homework resources - Minimum of 20 Public Access Computers (dedicated provision for learners, adults, children, and young people) - Gaming area within Children and Young Persons space including consoles and screens - Free Wi-Fi access - Self Service Points near Ground Floor entrances - Community and arts event space - Co-located with Customer Service Centre or equivalent

	• public facing partner • Wide range of information, link to E-Government.
Town Library	• Population in the range 8,000 -14,000 • Library located in town centre • Floor space in metres square ($215m^2$ to $400m^2$) • Vending facility • Minimum of 15,000 items of stock in wide variety of formats. Inclusion of collections that support a wide range of recreational interests and learning needs - School/Homework resources • Minimum of 15 Public Access Computers (dedicated provision for learners, adults, children, and young people) • Gaming area within Children and Young Persons space including consoles and screens – where floor space and site design allows • Free Wi-Fi access • Self Service Points near main entrance • Community meeting and event space • Co-located with Customer Services or equivalent public facing partner • Range of information services, link to E-Government
Joint use / village	**Joint Use / Village Library (Two sub tiers, 4 day per week for larger community sites and 3 day per week operation for others)** • Population in the range 4,500 – 8,000 • Library located near village centre/shopping area • Floor space in metres square ($120m^2$ to $215m^2$) • Small vending provision for beverages where achievable • Minimum of 5,000 items of stock in variety of formats. Inclusion of collections that support a wide range of recreational interests and learning needs - School/Homework resources • Minimum of 10 Public Access Computers • Optional Self Service dependent on local need and other community uses of the site • Community meeting and event space where possible • Co-located with other community or Council partners where possible • Range of online and paper information sources
Community Link	• Population less than 4,500 • Delivered jointly with a partner agency, voluntary group, and/or local community • Scalable staffing depending on joint delivery options and funding available • Minimum of 5 Public Access Computers

	• Self Service kiosks as part of mixed staffing solution where tenable • 1,500 to 5,000 resources for loans and study

57. Such a model is designed for a more urban area and would require adjustment for areas of lower, more scattered rural populations. However it provides a useful approach in identifying bands of provision to form the basis for the co-located community hub.

58. The Caerphilly model is similar to other models being used in library authorities across the UK. For example, Dorset included additional criteria such as ethnic population and rurality issues such as transport. The rurality dimension is essential for many authorities in Wales as is the effective delivery of bilingual services and services for disabled users and those unable to reach libraries.

59. Using a defined offer to the public based on a banding framework built around the profile of the communities has been extremely successful in underpinning the strategic developments of libraries in Caerphilly and is the best example in Wales. In addition to the strategy, there is also a related action plan[18] which has led to significant improvements in library provision in the local authority area. Such an approach would be beneficial for other parts of Wales as part of the development of the roadmap for the new public library service management model.

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[18]Caerphilly CBC. (2014). *Library Service Strategic Action Plan 2014-17.* Available from: http://tinyurl.com/qd7a9xt

VI. Regional Delivery Consortia versus National Delivery

Assessment of the Current Position: Delivery by 22 Local Authorities

60. A consultation on a Welsh Government White Paper for reforming local government services ended in April 2015. In association with this development, a map of potential new local authorities was issued in June 2015 outlining 8 or 9 future local authorities to replace the existing 22 local authorities.

61. An assessment has been made (see Table below) which assesses the strengths and weaknesses of a public library service based on the existing 22 local authorities in terms of delivering sufficient capacity and capability to support local delivery.

Table 1: Potential strengths and weaknesses of current provision

Option: Maintaining Current Provision	
Timescale for Delivery: Immediate	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Funding: Public library services will continue to be resourced by local authority funding which is predicted to reduce over the next 3 years in real terms. The total budgeted gross revenue expenditure (based on June 2014) by local authorities on public libraries in Wales in 2014-15 was £48.217m or £16 per head of population. This compares to the outturn revenue gross expenditure for 2013-14 of £56.877m. (-15.2%). The budgeted gross revenue expenditure on libraries for 2015-16 shows a further reduction to £44.521m.(-21.7% compared to the 2013-14 outturn figures) (Source - StatsWales)	**Possible sources of funding and efficiencies:** Limited opportunities for one-off funding investments and very limited opportunity to increase income.
Public - Local accountability of the library service - Strong public affinity to their local library - Co-location of with other council/local services easier to deliver and aids sustainability of local access to service points	Public - Impact of proposed reduction in funding will impact on quality and range of resources provided leading to reduced usage - Continued closure of public libraries and/or transfers of public libraries to community management requiring significant public input as volunteers

Financial • No additional costs to implement changes • Public libraries have delivered financial savings of between 0.7% and 19.9% in 2014-15 as outlined in the *Expert Review* and to date there has been limited impact on services in most authorities • Collaboration on resource procurement in place Delivery • Currently being implemented • Aligned to the current local authority structure and governance model • No issues around ownership of assets Staffing • No issues around TUPE Strategic • Closer alignment of the public library service strategy with the local authority strategy • National cross-sector library strategy in place	• Increased variability in the level of services provided Financial • Public libraries have delivered financial savings of between 0.7% and 19.9% in 2014-15 as outlined in the *Expert Review* (updated figures will be available in July), and further savings are required • Public library services are being asked to indicate the impact of potential further savings of up to 50% of their funding in some cases • Lack of harmonisation impacting on public services and efficiency savings even with national procurement • Less attractive to major funders than the other models due to time taken to develop all Wales initiatives Delivery • Fragmentation of the public library service with a wider range of stakeholders providing the services leading to a more varied level of service • Resilience of smaller library services in general to mitigate the impact of funding reductions • Current distribution of service points does not fully reflect demographic changes and elements are still based on historical provision Staffing • Reduced level of staffing, especially professional librarians, will result in increasing difficulty in delivering core services • Lack of capacity to release staff for developmental work and training • Few opportunities to realign staffing resources from

	administrative tasks to focus on delivering advice and training direct to users, e.g. literacy, job seeking, lifelong learning and digital inclusion • Significant impact of long-term staff absences on service provision due to small staffing compliment • Reduction in subject specialist impacting on services • Not the most efficient use of remaining subject specialists (move to generalists with resultant impact on services to the public) • Staff on different pay scales / terms and conditions impacting on staff mobility • Flat structure will impact on opportunities for promotion and recruitment to the sector • Does not address leadership issues Strategic • Lack of cross-departmental planning at a local level and progress on cross-authority collaboration at a regional level • 22 local policies/strategies required • It takes longer to roll-out new services and examples of best practice across all Wales, e.g. e-services • Services unable to comply with the Welsh Public Library Standards with little likelihood for improvement • Deletion/downgrading of senior library management grades resulting inability to influence local government policy
Risks:	Likelihood:
Further reduction in public funding over the next 3 years	Certainty
Further closures of public library service points impacting on public services	Certainty

Further reduction in staffing impacting on public services	Certainty
Further fragmentation of public libraries with the development of community managed and trust run services	Certainty
Judicial Review / Public inquiry	High

62. The current model will lead to public library services being delivered by a mixture of local authorities or by trusts, with the statutory duty under the 1964 Act remaining with the local authorities. An added complexity is the disparate nature of the trusts being established. Some include other cultural services, others include leisure services. The decision to agree to the merger of public library service run by a trust to form a larger service will rest with the trustees who have to "act responsibly and only in the interests of the charity"[19]. This will become an increasing issue as many more local authorities consider transferring public library services to trusts.

63. Many of the authorities would continue to be small in terms of UK public library services and would struggle to provide a full range of services supported by professional staff. Research carried out as part of the *Expert Review* indicated that a relatively small reduction in funding, i.e. up to £100,000 will have a disproportionate impact on services in small library services leading to library closures and loss of professional librarians.

Assessment of Regional Collaboration based on Four Regional Consortia

64. Through co-operation between the local authorities it would be possible under section 4 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to establish 4 regional library services across Wales. The services could be delivered via a lead authority (via a "Contractual", "Delegation to a joint committee" or a "Delegation to another authority" model), trusts or through a company ("Corporate" model).

65. A report on *Alternative Structures for Public Library Services in North Wales*[20] was carried out by Robert Froud OBE in 2013. It was commissioned by the Heads of Library and Information Services (HOLIS) in North Wales and received financial support from the Welsh Government. The research included modelling existing financial data and performance data from the six North Wales authorities against future options and comparing the results against the Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards. One of the public library models reviewed was based on three public library services an amalgamation of Anglesey and Gwynedd, Conwy and Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. The report concluded that the three public library service model for North Wales did not offer significant economic and service incentive to aggregate services.

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[19] Charity Commission. (2013*). Charity Trustee: What's involved*. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/charity-trustee-whats-involved
[20] Froud, R. (2013). *Alternative Structures for Public Library Services in North Wales*. HOLIS.

The report outlined potential efficiencies as a result of staff restructuring on performance against the relevant Welsh Public Library Standards and concluded that for Anglesey and Gwynedd "this represents a small step forwards – but very close to the status quo for both services".

66. An assessment has been made (see Table below) which assesses the strengths and weaknesses of a public library service based on 4 regional consortia in terms of delivering sufficient capacity and capability to support local delivery.

Option: Four Regional Consortia	
Time-scale for Delivery: 2-3 years with the potential of a pilot project in North Wales.	
Funding: An agreed funding formula will be required to identify the financial contribution of each new local authority to the partnership. The funding for local authorities is predicted to reduce over the next 3 years in real terms.	
Potential Strengths • More consistent delivery of services to the public across Wales • Harmonisation will also make it easier for the public to use library services across the region – standard loan period / fines etc. • Utilise the skills of Welsh speaking staff in improving bilingual services over a wider geographic area • Improved provision of advice and support by professional staff Financial • Harmonisation of procedures and rationalisation of remaining back-office functions will bring financial savings due to economies of scale • Financial savings from management restructuring (after pay-back period if redundancy payments apply) • More attractive to potential funders as a result of easier roll-out of national offer and increased impact and outcomes compared to local projects Delivery • increased ability to re-invest savings in	**Potential Weaknesses** • Continued closure of public libraries • Issues around local accountability • potential loss of public affinity to their local library and service Financial • Issues around agreeing the financial contribution from participating authorities Delivery • The regional services will have to address issues around managing a local service run by the local authority and a library service being managed by a trust • Issues around ownership of assets will need to be addressed • Not part of the proposed local authority re-structure and governance model • Communication system needs to be effective to avoid marginalisation of staff, service points and users • More difficult to maintain high levels of bilingual services in Welsh speaking areas • Disruption to delivering key priorities

frontline services
• 4 regional services will be more resilient compared to 22 services
• If the timetable for the roll-out of the regional service is aligned with local government reorganisation, issues such as TUPE can be dealt with as part of the overall transition to the new authorities
 	
Staffing
• More efficient use of staff to support users
    ○ Refocus more professional staff on assisting the public
    ○ More efficient and consistent use of self-issue technology would release more staff to assist the public
    ○ Better use of staff specialist skills and the possibility of introducing new specialist skills and services
    ○ Significant opportunities to realign staffing from administration to focus on delivering advice and training direct to users, e.g. literacy, job seeking, lifelong learning and digital inclusion
• Better succession planning possible
• Improved staffing structure allowing better progression
 	
Strategic
• Builds on the regional work undertaken as part of Libraries Inspire
• Easier and more efficient to introduce new services on an all-Wales basis compared to 22 local authorities
• Easier to align with national strategies
• Aligned with the 4 regional educational consortia
• An opportunity to provide greater leadership in developing library services with 4 senior library service managers at the appropriate
	for a period of c. 12 months due to restructuring
	
	Staffing
	• Staff on different pay scales / terms and condition and therefore TUPE issues will have to be addressed
	
	Strategic
	• More difficult to align with local strategies
	• More difficult to co-locate with other local authority services
	• More diverse political accountabilities

management grade • Opportunity to build on the strengths of each authority making up the partnership • Large enough to become a strategic player in the region	
Risks:	Likelihood:
The longer the lead-in time the more the new regions will have to deal with the disaggregation of the service and the increasing disparity of services as the result of the funding reductions.	High
Further reduction in public funding over the next 3 years	Certainty
Further closures of public library service points impacting on services	Certainty
Loss of sense of ownership from the public	Medium
Further reduction in staffing impacting on services and resulting increased costs in developing a new skilled workforce	High
Complexity of rolling-out a model different to the new local authority structure	Medium

67. The proposed four regions are North Wales, Mid and South West Wales, South Wales Central, and South Wales East. Existing regional library partnerships, geography, demographic data and service delivery issues were considered in developing the regions. Parts of the Mid and South West Wales region have low population densities and a regional public library service for Mid and South West Wales would need to develop a service that particularly addresses this issue.

Regions	Local authorities
North Wales	Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Wrexham
South West and Mid Wales	Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Swansea
South Wales Central	Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Vale of Glamorgan
South Wales East	Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen

68. This model has the potential to transform public library services through a more consistent delivery of public library services across the whole of Wales, delivering efficiency savings in terms of the rationalisation of back-office functions and the harmonisation of procedures to enable resources to be

redirected to frontline services at the local community level. Supported by a formal agreement, the Regional Consortia would be better able to rationalise the management of decreasing resources and to encourage joint delivery models of community services at the local level.

69. The success of the regional delivery of archive services administered by a lead authority in West Glamorgan, Glamorgan and Gwent following local government reorganisation in 1996 demonstrates that local authorities can establish and maintain robust governance structures and financial arrangements. The regional archive services have not been immune from funding reductions but, as larger services, they have been able to better absorb the impact of the reductions with less direct impact on services to the public.

70. In 2012, the Welsh Government worked with the 22 local authorities to establish 4 regional consortia for progressing the national school improvement agenda. It was agreed that working through a consortia approach added value to what local authorities could achieve on their own, allowing them to share good practice, knowledge and skills, magnify local strengths and build capacity. The 4 regional consortia consist of:

- North Wales (Flintshire, Conwy, Wrexham, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, Denbighshire)
- South West and Mid Wales (Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Ceredigion)
- South Wales Central (Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Vale of Glamorgan)
- South East Wales (Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen)

This model provides an example of an existing agreement to work together to deliver a common purpose more effectively.

71. Whether the governance of the proposed Regional consortium should be based on local authorities or the establishment of a regional trust requires more detailed modelling. The financial benefits of not paying National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) has been identified by the WLGA as a major issue in local authorities establishing trusts to deliver cultural and leisure services. If this exemption was extended to public library services, there is a greater likelihood that services would remain under direct local government management. The increasing fragmentation of management and governance arrangements between local authorities and trusts will present a challenge in progressing regional consortia.

Delivering a Public Library Service on a National Basis

72.   A single national service along the lines of Libraries NI in Northern Ireland provides an alternative delivery model. Libraries NI is a sponsored body funded

by the Northern Ireland Assembly and its work is overseen by a Board appointed by the Minister. In order to reflect local needs a national library service for Wales would need to be underpinned by a regional structure and an Advisory Council with representatives from local authorities, users and the profession.

73. The strengths and weaknesses of delivering a public library service based on a national model are outlined in the Table below.

Option: National Public Library Service for Wales	
Time scale for Delivery: As in Northern Ireland, this model would require new legislation which is likely to take around three years to become law and 18 months to two years to become fully functional.	
Funding Requirements: Current local authority revenue expenditure on public libraries is around £50 million per annum with additional capital expenditure.	

Potential benefits
• The national model would deliver a more consistent service to people across Wales (all-Wales offer) in addition to targeting priority categories, e.g. Community First clusters
• Efficiency savings could be reinvested in frontline services
• Harmonisation will also make it easier for the public to use library services across Wales – standard loan period / fines etc.
• Utilise the skills of Welsh speaking staff in improving bilingual services over a wider geographic area
 	
Financial
• Deliver efficiency savings in terms of:
   o management restructuring, following the pay-back period on any redundancy payments
   o Procurement and roll-out of services, e.g. self-issue to release staff to assist the public
	Potential weaknesses
	• It will not halt the current closure of public libraries
	• Issues around local accountability will need to be addressed
	• Loss of public affinity to their local library and service
	
	Financial
	• Additional costs in relation to setting up a central finance and human resources
	• Issues around hypothecation or the allocation of funding from local authorities
	
	Delivery
	• Due to time scales it will not address the short term fragmentation of public library services
	• A national service will have to address issues around inheriting a service run by the ex-local authority and a library service being managed by a trust
	• Issues around ownership of assets will need to be addressed

o   Reduce the level of central charges made by local against the public library service
    o   Single online public library presence
    o   Maximise resource sharing
• Maximises the benefits from the harmonisation of procedures and rationalisation of remaining back-office functions will bring financial savings due to economies of scale
• More attractive to potential funders as a result of the easier roll-out of national offer and increased impact and outcomes compared to local projects
 	
Delivery
• All- Wales branding and audience development will assist with the promotion and uptake of library services
• More efficient and consistent use of self-issue technology would release more staff to assist the public
 	
Staffing
• Improved staff structure:
    o   Making better use of professional expertise to assist the public
    o   Provide staff expertise in new areas (or reintroduce – e.g. business information)
    o   More opportunity for staff progression making the profession more attractive
    o   Improved succession planning
 	
Strategic
• More strategic intervention to address issues such as digital inclusion and assistance into work
• As a result of the scale of
	• Not part of the local authority structure and governance model
	• Possible issues around the delivery of services over such a wide geographical area
	
	Staffing
	• Staff on different pay scales / terms and condition and therefore TUPE issues will have to be addressed
	
	Strategic
	• More difficult to align services with local priorities
	• More difficult to co-locate with other local authority services
	• More diverse political accountabilities

provision, the service has a potential to become a major strategic player – one-stop shop to a Wales-wide service • Easier to align with national strategies	
Risks:	Likelihood:
Further reduction in public funding in real terms over the next 3 years	Certainty
Further closures of public library service points impacting on services	High
Loss of sense of ownership from the public	Medium
Further reduction in staffing impacting on services and resulting increased costs in developing a new skilled workforce in the future	Low
Complexity of rolling-out a model different to the new local authority structure	Medium

74. The main benefits of a Northern Ireland service identified were the:
    - ability to deliver a more consistent public library service to people across the whole of Northern Ireland
    - speedier and more efficient roll-out of new services
    - the transfer of public library services from 5 Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland, delivered efficiency savings as part of the restructuring of management
    - the resulting improved staffing structure enabled greater focus on targeting services which contribute to priorities such as literacy, digital skills and assisting people into work
    - single procurement for ICT hardware and services
    - improved co-ordination of workforce development
    - higher political profile
    - more resilient in responding to reductions in funding

75. The success of Libraries NI in delivering on shared library/Assembly priorities was recognised by the Northern Ireland Minister when the funding for Libraries NI for 2014-15 was reduced by 7% rather than the 14% forecast. The indications are that this reduction in funding can be implemented without further library closures, thus underlining the greater resilience of a larger organisation. The ability of the Northern Ireland Assembly to talk to a single organisation for Northern Ireland to roll-out key public library projects should not be underestimated.

76. Despite the difference in the population and size of Northern Ireland there are similarities with Wales, public libraries are a devolved service, issues of rurality and expenditure on public libraries per 1,000 are similar:

77. However there are other key considerations that need to be taken into account. The establishment of Libraries NI required a new Libraries Act for Northern Ireland. To introduce such an Act in Wales would require a 3-4 year lead-in time once it was placed on the list for legislation. It took a further 18 months to establish Libraries NI and 2 years may be a more accurate time scale for a slightly larger service. Even with political support for such an Act, it would take 5-6 years to establish a National Library Service for Wales. Therefore it would not be possible to implement a national service alongside any local government reorganisation, but would require further restructuring of library services within 2 years of reorganisation.

78. To fund the service, money would need to be hypothecated out/retained by the Welsh Government from funding for local authorities. In addition, there would be additional set-up costs related to the establishment of a new National Service.

79. There is no doubt, that following the pay-back period in terms of one-off set-up costs, that this model would provide a more robust, efficient and above all a more consistent level of service to the people of Wales. However issues around time scales in introducing a new Act and the need for start-up funding are significant barriers.

VII. A National Digital Public Library for Wales

80. One area that has seen significant collaboration in Wales is the development of a range of cost-efficient online services available to the Welsh public. Local authority, educational, workplace libraries and the National Library of Wales have collaborated as part of the Welsh Government's library strategies to offer free online services to the public, alongside what they provide directly to their own users. There is a consensus that online public library services are better developed collaboratively on an all-Wales basis.

Efficient Procurement

81. Central to the *Resources for All* strand of the *Libraries Inspire* strategy is that Welsh libraries work collaboratively to develop a national offer for free remote access, e.g. from home or in the workplace, to online services. There is evidence that joint procurement of services on an all-Wales basis can result in 30-40% savings in the cost of purchasing online services.

82. For example, Neath Port Talbot has led on the joint procurement of e-books, e-zines and now e-audio books. In some cases it is more flexible and cheaper to purchase services based on 22 authorities on an annual basis, due to the fast changing pricing models adopted by the industry. Further digital services such as the Citizen's Test and the Driving Theory Test could be included.

83. More work is now needed to build on the current good practice and establish a formal agreement to jointly deliver the National Digital Public Library Service with the National Library of Wales acting as the central hub for the procurement of online services.

84. The aim should be a single log in for users across Wales which could be underpinned by a single inter-operable public library card. The adoption of a single library management system for Wales (LMS) would be an essential pre-requisite to deliver this facility. Such a system would also enable usage and trends to be monitored to improve the receptiveness of library services to user needs.

New Digital Services

85. The adoption of new services could benefit from the experience of countries such as Denmark where library services offer music and video downloads as part of the service. Denmark is also currently investing in bringing together online services into a more integrated and targeted offer and has developed a website for children which provides access to a range of relevant resources. Greater alignment with the Hwb platform in Wales would enable children to use libraries to complete schoolwork and access resources. In deprived areas, this would be a particularly important enabling service to support schoolwork.

86.   The demands on free digital services are likely to increase as the UK government's digital by default policy is fully implemented. The experience of Welsh local authorities which piloted the Universal JobMatch system was that claimants needed significant support to log on and access the service, and that staff needed training in the system to provide effective help. When Universal Credit is fully implemented, all Welsh public libraries will need to be prepared to deal with a significant number of potentially vulnerable individuals at a time when staffing resources are decreasing.

VIII. Conclusion

87. All indications are that funding for libraries will continue to reduce in real terms for the next three years. Unless there is some form of intervention, the detrimental fragmentation of public library service delivery in Wales will continue. The transfer of public libraries from local authorities to trusts will bring benefits in terms of reduced rates and VAT, but indications are that trusts will also receive reduced funding from local authorities year-on-year. Trusts can deliver efficiencies in terms of rates and VAT, but balanced with the cost of establishment, their long-term viability requires further research.

88. It is likely that during the next three years more local libraries will close with small libraries being transferred to community management if there is no agreement on a new model for public library delivery. Yet the establishment of local libraries as co-located community hubs provides the opportunity for a sustainable management and financial model to replace the traditional single service delivery model. Such community hubs could offer multi-service delivery, building on professional skills of knowledge management and customer support. The adoption of a banding arrangement to map provision would support the retention of services across Wales as fragmentation continues to occur within individual local authority area.

89. The guidance issued on how local authorities support small community managed libraries also provides opportunities to ensure that local provision is backed by professional support.

90. The proposal to establish a single National Digital Public Library for Wales is compelling from the evidence of the cost savings and likely improved services to users. An agreement on a single library management system for Wales will be an essential pre-requisite to achieving this objective in the short term.

91. The evidence indicates that unless a form of formal and structured regional collaboration is established, the capacity and capability of local libraries to deliver core services as well as additional digital support will be severely limited. Detailed discussion will be needed with local authorities on whether 4 regional consortia (following the school improvement model) could be established, their governance arrangements, workforce responsibilities and financial arrangements. This discussion should begin immediately to mitigate the increasing fragmentation of service delivery across Wales. It is likely that set up costs of around £2m will be required to establish the new service model over a 2 year period if agreement could be reached in addition to existing budgets. Work underway in North Wales relating to the implementation of the Library Management System for Wales and the related harmonisation and collaboration will provide greater detail on the costings of introducing regional services.

92. The model of a national public library service has clear benefits in terms of

consistency of service delivery and resilience in the face of budgetary pressures. However the longer lead in time mitigates against this approach in the short term as recent evidence clearly demonstrates that action is required now to ensure that the people of Wales continue to enjoy a competent, professionally led service which contributes through the joint delivery of community services to the wellbeing of communities across Wales.

93.   Such a radical new approach to the delivery of public library services will require a strong commitment at the national and local level. There are significant gains to be made from formal collaboration and risks to be addressed from the consequences of inaction. The establishment of a joint working group between the Welsh Government and the WLGA would enable a roadmap to be constructed of the short, medium and long term objectives; the necessary processes in establishing libraries as co-located community hubs with provision mapped across Wales; and the establishment and governance of 4 regional consortia to deliver an agenda of continuous improvement for library services. This task and finish group would also enable strategic agreements to be reached on where libraries could deliver added value for the delivery of services tackling poverty and improving skills at the local community level.

Appendix 1: Welsh Public Library Standards Core Entitlements

Customers and Communities

WPLSCE 1 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.
WPLSCE 2 Libraries in Wales will stage a range of activities to support learning, enjoyment and enable users to obtain the maximum benefit from the available resources.
WPLSCE 3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services and resources to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, and community participation

Access for All

WPLSCE 4 Libraries in Wales will be open to all members of their communities.
WPLSCE 5 Libraries in Wales will be free to join.
WPLSCE 6 Libraries in Wales will provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable opening hours.
WPLSCE 7 Libraries in Wales will provide information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.

Learning for Life

WPLSCE 8 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free
WPLSCE 9 Libraries in Wales will deliver free access to information
WPLSCE 10 libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.
WPLSCE 11 Libraries in Wales will deliver free use of online information resources 24 hours a day.
WPLSCE 12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to high quality resources in a range of formats, including those in the Welsh language, reflecting changing forms of publication.
WPLSCE 13 Libraries in Wales will share their catalogues, to enable a single search of all Welsh library resources.

Leadership and Development

WPLSCE 14 Libraries in Wales will promote libraries to attract more people to benefit from their services.
WPLSCE 15 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.
WPLSCE 16 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.
WPLSCE 17 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.
WPLSCE 18 Libraries in Wales will provide a clear, timely and transparent complaints process if things go wrong.

Appendix 2: Summary of public library data by regions and current local authorities. Data from StatsWales

	Population / Area				Expenditure	
	Population	Population density - Midyear 2014	Area (Km²)	WIMD 2011 % 0f LSOAs in most deprived 10%	Gross revenue expenditure outturn 2012-13	Gross revenue expenditure outturn 2013-14
North Wales						
Conwy	116,287	103.3	1,125.80	3.00	2,169,823	2,194,710
Denbighshire	94,791	113.3	836.7	10	2,091,166	2,132,689
Flintshire	153,804	351.6	437.5	4	2,823,596	2,904,944
Gwynedd	122,273	48.2	2,534.90	3.00	2,160,000	2,027,000
Isle of Anglesey	70,169	98.6	711.3	2	1,188,444	1,114,000
Wrexham	136,714	271.4	503.8	6	2,467,617	2,567,192
	694,038		6,150.00		12,900,646	12,940,535
South West and Mid						
Carmarthenshire	184,898	78	2,370.30	5.00	2,902,118	2,866,369
Ceredigion	75,425	42.2	1,785.60	0.00	1,431,598	1,302,667
Neath Port Talbot	140,490	318.3	441.3	15	2,820,537	2,723,871
Swansea	241,297	635.5	379.7	12	3,621,000	3,629,000
Pembrokeshire	123,666	76.4	1,618.70	4.00	1,945,000	1,946,000
Powys	132,675	25.6	5,180.70	1.00	2,507,097	2,499,771
	898,451		11,776.30		15,227,350	14,967,678
South Wales Central						
Bridgend	141,214	563.2	250.7	11	2,272,843	2,153,860
Cardiff	354,294	2523.5	140.4	16	6,565,000	6,760,024
Merthyr Tydfil	59,065	530	111.4	25	909,000	872,245
Rhondda Cynon Taf	236,888	558.5	424.2	18	4,108,438	3,946,248
Vale of Glamorgan	127,685	385.8	330.9	6	2,654,000	2,616,000
	919,146		1257.6		16,509,281	16,348,377
South Wales East						
Blaenau Gwent	69,674	640.8	108.7	23	1,143,091	1,156,161
Caerphilly	179,941	648.7	277.4	15	4,181,000	4,219,000
Monmouthshire	92,336	108.7	849.1	0	1,547,232	1,755,998
Newport	146,841	770.7	190.5	16	2,151,420	3,550,795
Torfaen	91,609	728.8	125.7	7	1,500,000	1,938,000
	580,401		1551.4		10,522,743	12,619,954
Wales	3,092,036	149.1	20,735.50			

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