



DRAFT LIBRARY SERVICE
STRATEGIC VISION
2024-2028 



2024
2028

FOREWORD

Caerphilly, like many other councils across Wales is faced with significant financial challenges and at a time of rapid change and evolving community needs, library services stand at a significant crossroads.

Libraries have already evolved over the years from spaces of quiet reflection and study to become vibrant community spaces for the enjoyment of residents of all ages.

Caerphilly county currently has comparatively more library locations in Wales than other similarly sized councils and whilst that has historically been considered a real positive, keeping all of the sites open has come at a high price. We have had to make a number of sacrifices such as introducing single staffing locations and a reduction in opening hours.

When faced with a £45m funding gap over the next two years we must act quickly to develop strategies to reduce budgets whilst continuing to meet the needs of the community.

When exploring the future vision for the library service it was clear that they have already become so much more than a place to borrow and read books, and we have seen how the evolution of digital services has enhanced the offer to become far more inclusive.

We want to take that one step further and create a hub environment that acts as a one-stop-shop for residents. A warm and welcoming space that provides ready access to services in a town centre location with easy access to local transport links.

But we must recognise to bring this vision to life and enhance the customer experience for residents it does mean that we would need to reduce the number of facilities and focus our resources and funding on a smaller number of key facilities.

In order to protect and future-proof this service, we must look at the big picture and this vision sets out how we will evolve our library service to offer a more community centred approach, this means that a whole host of council and community services can operate from these locations making it more accessible for residents to receive advice and support.

We want to hear your views on this vision as that will help us to shape the future service delivery, and we hope work towards empowering our communities to thrive.



Cllr Sean Morgan
Leader of the Council



Cllr Carol Andrews
Cabinet Member for Education and Communities

THE PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC VISION

This strategic vision sets out Caerphilly County Borough Council's commitment to provide a sustainable, inclusive and inspiring library service that supports life-long learning and facilitates community connection for current and future generations.

As a service for people of all ages libraries should provide a modern and versatile space that is able to adapt to support community needs.

The strategic vision sets out how Caerphilly's Library Service will become part of a community hub model to offer greater access to a wide range of services to meet the needs of residents.

As part of the implementation of the strategic vision we will engage with residents to understand the community needs and work together to design a fit for purpose and sustainable service.

The 4 key objectives have been created with the Council's Corporate Plan, the well-being objectives and the Welsh Public Library Standards in mind.

Strategic Vision Statement:

"We will deliver a welcoming and sustainable Library Service by integrating into a Hub model, to provide all residents with the opportunity to access library resources and other support, in town centre locations across the county borough."



OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Improve and develop the library services availability and offer

What we are trying to achieve:

- Bring our services together in town centre locations at Bargoed, Blackwood, Caerphilly, Rhymney, Risca and Ystrad Mynach.
- Offer access to library services that meet the needs of residents, this includes lunchtimes, evenings and weekends.
- Develop the customer offer of the town centre libraries by integrating into a Hub model to include access to other services and support.
- Increase footfall at town centres and libraries and increase overall membership.
- Promote access to the digital library service to meet the evolving needs of the community.

Outcomes:

- We intend to have 6 town centre-based facilities.
- All facilities will be open at times that meet the needs of the surrounding community.
- We will work holistically with the community and partner organisations to provide a one-stop-shop for advice and support.
- Boost the local economy by increasing footfall in town centre locations.
- Create an informed, engaged and connected community by enhancing the libraries role as a vital community resource.



Objective 2: Help residents to access information, advice and support in a Hub location

What we are trying to achieve:

- Provide digitally enabled shared spaces for use by the community and partners and also offer support to access digital services.
- Design spaces that are safe, inclusive and welcoming to bring people and communities together.
- Provide a space that supports individual learning, digital inclusion, access to lending stock and provides free Wifi and access to equipment.
- Strengthen links with partner organisations to improve the customer offer.
- Provide a range of library led and community-led events that support community wellbeing and cohesion.

Outcomes:

- Improved access to services for residents who require one-to-one support.
- Provide access to a range of library resources and other services that enhance community wellbeing and enjoyment for all ages.
- Enable digital independence and self-service.
- Provide a space for discovery and an enthusiasm for life-long learning.



Objective 3: Put community needs at the heart of our town centre Hubs, to support and encourage greater resilience for individuals through support and signposting

What we are trying to achieve:

- Recognise communities as active partners and listen to and respond to their needs.
- Prioritise prevention and improve resilience by helping to shift support towards more preventative services that tackle long-standing inequalities.
- Enable people who wish to give some of their own time to support volunteer programmes.

Outcomes:

- Provide further opportunity to build a community around the libraries, enabling more community participation.
- Reduce the demand for reactive services by addressing local issues.
- Enhance trust and support relationship building with the community.
- Support community empowerment and an enhanced sense of community control
- Increase participation in existing volunteer programmes such as Digital Fridays and create new opportunities.



Objective 4: Rationalise the number of buildings to maximise resources and improve the overall offer

What we are trying to achieve:

- To maintain a comprehensive, efficient and sustainable library services we may need to cease council provision in the remaining 12 locations and consider options for an alternative offer in those communities e.g. expanding the community outreach programme.
- Contribute towards the council's significant saving requirement of £45m in the next two financial years.
- Consolidate our resources and focus them on service development at fewer library locations to continuously meet the changing needs of residents.
- Review the provision of library outreach services to maintain a presence in communities.

Outcomes:

- Remove the need for single staffed libraries for greater capacity and resilience.
- Improved financial sustainability for the Council and the library service.
- Create opportunities to enhance the provision of library services in communities through a new Library Outreach Service.
- Improve the reach, usage and take-up of the Digital Services and LibraryLink.
- Provide opportunities for disposal, community asset transfer or other alternative delivery model where a suitable business case can be made.



Library Service Strategic Vision 2024-28 Routemap

2024



Services in town centre locations

Flexible opening times



Access to other services



Increase footfall

Objective 1: Improve and develop the library services availability and offer



Inclusive safe spaces



Digitally enabled shared spaces



Promote access to digital library

Free Wifi and access to equipment



Objective 2: Help residents to access information, advice and support in a Hub location

Strengthen links with partner organisations



Support community wellbeing and cohesion



Preventive services to tackle inequalities



Objective 3: Put community needs at the heart of our town centre Hubs, to support and encourage greater resilience for individuals through support and signposting

Listen to and respond to communities

Cease provision in 12 remaining locations



Review provision of LibraryLink



Support volunteer programmes



Objective 4: Rationalise the number of buildings to maximise resources and improve the overall offer



Create capacity within the service



£45m saving requirement over 2 years



2028



WHAT NEXT?

Caerphilly seeks to create a strategic view of the future of the library service and venues, to ensure that we provide a fit for purpose and sustainable service by moving to a Hub model.

Set against the backdrop of significant financial challenges, it is important to consider how we can improve the customer journey, while remaining financially resilient.

The public consultation for the vision and the objectives will provide an opportunity for us to better understand the community need to shape the development of the community hub vision. A model that has been tried and tested in the town of Rhymney and welcomed by the local community.

The vision indicates that the development of the Hub Model would result in a reduction of library venues to allow focus on the development of the town centre locations to provide a one-stop-shop approach for community services.

To understand the geographical implications of moving to a town centre model for our library services, with a focus on developing our outreach provisions across the county borough, we will be visiting all locations to hear the views of residents.

Our engagement activities will be used to inform decision-makers as they seek to progress with the continuous development of our library service.

- We recognise that every community is different, and we need to understand views on the proposal for hubs and fewer library locations.
- We need to consider how developments proposed within this strategy may affect individuals and communities.
- What could this vision mean for individuals with protected characteristics?
- We also consider the socio-economic circumstances of our communities, as we know that some areas in general face more disadvantage than others.
- We will consider the impact on the Welsh language and the commitments we have made in some of our key planning documents, like our Corporate Plan 2023-2028.

The Integrated Impact Assessment that accompanies this Vision sets out what we think those opportunities and implications of this strategy may be, but we need your views to help us understand your user experience. It is further supported by data and information relating to the service and locations.