

**COFNOD O BENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO GAN SWYDDOG**  
**RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION**

**Penderfyniad Allweddol | Key Decision** ✓

**PWNC | SUBJECT: Remote Library Services**

**DIBEN YR ADRODDIAD | PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:**

The purpose of this report is to initiate a public consultation on the Remote Library Services offered by the Council and to seek feedback on proposals for the future provision of remote services.

**PENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO | DELEGATED DECISION:**

It is recommended that the content of the report is noted and approval is given:

- To initiate a four-week public consultation period as outlined in 5.1 of the report.
- Subject to 2.1 in the report, agree to receive a further report summarising the results and feedback from the public consultation prior to any decision being made in relation to the proposals.



**Llofnod y Prif Swyddog**  
Chief Officer Signature

**Louise Davies**

**Enw (priflythrennau)**  
Name (Print Name)

**20.10.22**

**Dyddiad**  
Date

**Mae'r penderfyniad yn cael ei wneud yn unol ag Adran 15 o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000 (Swyddogaethau'r Corff Gweithredol) ac yn y cylch gorchwyl sy wedi'i nodi yn Adran 5 o Ran 3 o Gyfansoddiad y Cyngor.**

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

**YMGYNGHORI | CONSULTATION**



**20.10.22**

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**LLOFNOD YR AELOD YMGYNGHOROL O'R CABINET**  
CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE

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**DYDDIAD | DATE**

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**LLOFNOD SWYDDOG YMGYNGHOROL**  
CONSULTEE OFFICER SIGNATURE

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**DYDDIAD | DATE**

**RHEOLAU'R WEITHDREFN GALW-I-MEWN | CALL IN PROCEDURE RULES.**

**A YW'R PENDERFYNIAD YN UN BRYN A HEB FOD YN DESTUN PROSES GALW-I-MEWN GAN Y PWYLLGOR TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU?:**  
**IS THE DECISION DEEMED URGENT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**

**YDY | YES      NAC YDY | NO**

**Rheswm dros fod yn fater brys | Reason for Urgency:**

.....

**Os yw'n cael ei ystyried yn fater brys - Ilofnod y Llywydd, y Dirprwy Lywydd neu Bennaeth y Gwasanaeth Cyflogedig yn cadarnhau cytundeb fod y penderfyniad arfaethedig yn rhesymol yn yr holl amgylchiadau iddo gael ei drin fel mater brys, yn unol â rheol gweithdrefn trosolwg a chraffu 17.2:**

*If deemed urgent - signature of Presiding Officer or Deputy Presiding Officer or Head of Paid Service confirming agreement that the proposed decision is reasonable in all the circumstances for it being treated as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rule 17.2:*

.....  
**(Llywydd | Presiding Officer)**

.....  
**(Dyddiad | Date)**

**DS - Os yw hwn yn benderfyniad sy'n cael ei ail-ystyried yna does dim modd galw'r penderfyniad i mewn a bydd y penderfyniad yn dod i rym o'r dyddiad mae'r penderfyniad wedi'i lofnodi.**

**NB - If this is a reconsidered decision then the decision Cannot be Called In and the decision will take effect from the date the decision is signed.**

**AT DDEFNYDD Y SWYDDFA YN UNIG | FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

**DYDDIADAU CYHOEDDI A GWEITHREDU | PUBLICATION & IMPLEMENTATION DATES**

**CYHOEDDI | PUBLICATION**

**Cyhoeddi ar Wefan y Cyngor | Publication on the Council's Website:-** 21.10.22

**DYDDIAD | DATE**

**GWEITHREDU'R PENDERFYNIAD | IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

**Nodwch:** Fydd y penderfyniad hwn ddim yn dod i rym nac yn cael ei weithredu'n llawn nes cyn pen 3 diwrnod gwaith ar ôl ei gyhoeddi. Nod hyn yw ei alluogi i gael ei "Alw i Mewn" yn unol â Rheol 17.1, Rheolau Gweithdrefn Trosolwg a Chraffu.

**Note:** This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 3 clear working days after its publication to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

**Yn amodol ar y drefn "Galw i Mewn", caiff y penderfyniad ei roi ar waith ar / Subject to Call In the implementation date will be**

27.10.22  
**DYDDIAD / DATE**

**WEDI'I GYMERADWYO I'W GYHOEDDI: ✓ | APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION :✓**

**Rhagor o wybodaeth | Further Information:**

Cyfadran   Directorate:	Public Health, Protection & Community Services
Enw'r Person Cyswllt   Contact Name:	Caroline O'Neill
Swydd   Designation:	Head of Arts, Culture and Library Services
Rhif Ffôn   Telephone Number:	07786523614

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION**

**18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2022**

**REMOTE LIBRARY SERVICES**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR – PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Author(s):** Nick Kelland, Principal Librarian and Caroline O'Neill, Head of Arts, Culture and Library Services

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To initiate a public consultation on the Remote Library Services offered by the Council and to seek feedback on proposals for the future provision of remote services.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the content of the report is noted and approval is given:

- 2.1 To initiate a four-week public consultation period as outlined in 5.1.
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1, agree to receive a further report summarising the results and feedback from the public consultation prior to any decision being made in relation to the proposals.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Covid pandemic legislation required Library Services to close for long periods and they needed to adapt their services at pace to continue to serve the community during that time. In relation to Remote Library Services, the following adaptations were introduced:
- The Mobile Library Service was suspended in March 2020, due to the continued presence of Covid in the community and the fact that service users interact with staff in a confined space.
  - Staff and resources were transferred from the Mobile Library Service to provide an expanded 'At Home' Service. Existing mobile library users were contacted and asked if they would like to register for the service. Those that registered now receive fortnightly deliveries to their home address.
  - The 'At Home' Library Service differs from the Mobile Library Service in that it delivers books directly to a members' home. Whereas, the Mobile Library Service has set stops and members visit the vehicle to receive their books.

- Library members were encouraged to take up e-lending following investment from the Welsh Government, and the reallocation of library funds to e-books and e-audiobooks, to increase the digital collection in order to meet demand. This was assisted by the creation of 'Digital Membership', enabling the public to join online and become digital members of the library, gaining access to online collections without the need to visit a library.
- An 'Order and Collect' service was introduced, whereby a library member could select books or request a 'Librarian's Choice' for collection at a library of their choice. This service has remained in place after the lifting of restrictions due to its popularity with the public. Collection can be made by the member or by a member of their family and friends.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 An overarching lesson of the pandemic was the need to adapt services to meet current demand and needs. Consideration needs to be given to re-evaluate the adaptations made during the pandemic in order to ensure that the Library Service, and particularly Remote Library Services, best meet residents' needs.
- 4.2 The Mobile Library Service was the most traditional and established method for delivering Remote Library Services. The service model involves a large vehicle travelling around a prescribed route allowing members in communities to borrow books. Demand for this service had been reducing before the pandemic. A significant change to the delivery model of the Mobile Library Service, extensive promotion of the service, partnership working to encourage non-traditional use, and the introduction of relevant internet-enabled technologies had failed to prevent the services decline, and the range of new remote library services has ensured customer needs have been met via new services. Appendix 1 provides further detail in relation to the Mobile Library Service.
- 4.3 Unlike the Mobile Library Service, the 'At Home' Service operated throughout large periods of the pandemic. This service is able to support those who are unable to access either a static or mobile library due to disability, age or other personal barrier. During this period, staff and resources from the Library Service were used to extend the 'At Home' Service to existing mobile library users. In total, of the 394 registered mobile library users, 107 took up the offer of registering with this service. Many of the other users may have switched to digital or order and collect provision; however, there is no data to confirm this.
- 4.4 To date, we have received no official complaints or comments regarding the suspension of the Mobile Library Service. If this arrangement was to be made permanent, there is capacity to increase registration for the 'At Home' Service.
- 4.5 The pandemic led to an increase in electronic engagement, with significant increases being seen in the e-lending of books and audio (see Appendix 2). Borrowing of e-resources has remained high even after the removal of Covid restrictions. Waiting times and reservation numbers for e-stock have risen significantly, requiring us to evaluate the use of our book budget, allocating more

funds to the acquisition of e-stock. The increased number of e-resources available offers greater potential for their use in Remote Library Services alongside a partner service providing loans of digital equipment.

- 4.6 Given the changes made as a result of the pandemic restrictions, it is important that the Council engages with customers to understand their opinion of the new or enhanced remote library services and to seek their views on current changes. It will also enable the Council to gather views on further changes that could be considered in respect of Remote Library Services in the future.

## **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Based on the conclusions of Welsh Government's 'Expert Review of Public Libraries in Wales 2014', the proposed changes to Remote Library Services would be considered by the Expert Review as being "significant". The guidance provided by Welsh Government recommends that a '*robust consultation is essential in order to take into account the views of the public.*'

- 5.2 The proposal outlined is subject to a four-week public consultation.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications associated with undertaking the proposed consultation. Any financial implications arising from decisions recommended in response to the consultation will be subject to consideration in a future report.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires local authorities to ensure the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient service' without providing any criteria for what can be considered as 'comprehensive and efficient'. There is no statutory requirement for the Council to provide an At Home or Mobile Library Service.

- 7.2 In Wales, the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) has clear quality indicators that Library Services are required to abide by. The WPLS do not specify the need for an At Home or Mobile Library Service and the provision of such services are not included as a quality indicator. The Standards also requires Library Services to meet 12 Core Entitlements which RCT Libraries meet in full. Implementing the recommendations made within this report would not affect our performance against these core entitlements.

## **8. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 8.1 Expanding the Remote Library Services offered by the Council alongside its static libraries promotes independence and positive lives for everyone, ensuring the Council is able to offer an accessible option for all residents, including those unable to visit a static library.



## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The need to adapt services during the Covid 19 pandemic provided Library Services with an opportunity to explore alternative methods of service delivery. It highlighted that alternative services can offer improved levels of service at reduced costs.
- 9.2 The current 'At Home' Service provision is effective and efficient in its delivery when considered against the high cost and declining public usage of the existing Mobile Library Service.
- 9.3 It is proposed that the Council undertakes a four-week public consultation period on the future provision of remote library services including the delivery of the 'At Home' Service and online and e-book services.



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION**

**18<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2022**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR – PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**REMOTE LIBRARY SERVICES**

**Background Papers:**

None

**Officer to contact:**

Caroline O'Neill, Head of Arts, Culture and Library Services

## Appendix 1

The Mobile Library Service underwent a major restructure in 2018 following a review of the fleet vehicles and the service provision of many short stops did not meet customer or service expectations.

Prior to the restructure in 2018 the service offered 393 fortnightly stops as follows:

- 353 street stops that lasted 10-15 minutes
- 28 stops at sheltered housing units, alcohol/mental health units and residential homes for 20-40 minutes
- 12 evening and Saturday stops for 3 hours at locations where static libraries had previously been closed.

After public consultation, the 3 obsolete mobile library vehicles were replaced with 2 new custom-built vehicles with capacity to offer Wi-Fi enabled devices to customers. This newly structured service offers:

- 55 street stops of 2.5 hours duration (including sheltered housing units, alcohol/mental health units and residential homes)
- Opportunities for third parties to promote services, host drop-in sessions etc at outreach sites.

Evening and weekend stops were terminated due to low usage.

Despite these changes to the Mobile Library Service, there has not been an increase in mobile library users or item issues. In the year 2019/20, estimated visitor numbers were 3706. In 2017/18, there were 7920 visits; therefore, 2019/20 saw a decrease of 4214 (or 72%) on the last full year of the previous structures provision. Item issues were 48,252 for 2019/20, a decrease of 39,696 (or 58%) on the previous period of previous provision in 2017/18, which saw 87,948 issues.

The Mobile Library Service currently costs the Council £93,411. This includes staff costs and two mobile library vehicles with all associated costs, office and associated storage space, and a commitment from the Library Services' book budget. The average cost of a visit to a static library in 2019/20 was £2.61. The Average cost of a visit to a mobile library in the same period was £28.56.



## Appendix 2

April – August 2020 – 2021, year on year comparison

Authority	eAudio loans			eBook loans			Total loans		
	April - August 2020	April - August 2021	Variance	April - August 2020	April - August 2021	Variance	April - August 2020	April - August 2021	Variance
RCT	8,503	10,073	18%	10,120	10,122	0%	18,623	20,195	8%
Consortium	175,418	205,239	17%	218,671	207,577	-5%	394,089	412,816	5%

  

Authority	Total registered users			Active users			Loans per active user		
	Aug-20	Aug-21	Variance	Aug-20	Aug-21	Variance	Aug-20	Aug-21	Variance
RCT	2,202	2,907	32%	696	814	17%	5.46	5.15	-6%
Consortium	47,443	60,793	28%	16,073	16,989	6%	5.13	5.06	-1%

April – July 2021 – 2022, year on year comparison

Authority	eAudio loans			eBook loans			Total loans		
	April - July 2021	April - July 2022	YOY Variance	April - July 2021	April - July 2022	YOY Variance	April - July 2021	April - July 2022	YOY Variance
RCT	8,010	9,289	16%	7,994	8,293	4%	16,004	17,582	10%
Welsh Consortium	162,098	200,295	24%	165,196	170,208	3%	327,294	370,503	13%

  

Authority	Total registered users			Active users			Average loans per active user		
	By end July 2021	By end July 2022	YOY Variance	During the month of July 2021	During the month of July 2022	YOY Variance	During the month of July 2021	During the month of July 2022	YOY Variance
RCT	2,845	3,667	29%	779	978	26%	5.10	4.67	-8%
Welsh Consortium	59,585	74,549	25%	16,363	19,777	21%	5.04	4.81	-5%