Ministerial note: Judicial Review Judgement - Caerphilly County Borough Council Libraries closures

The King On the application of Susanne Girdler v Caerphilly County Borough Council

Overview

The case brought was a judicial review of the decision by Caerphilly County Borough Council (CBC) to close libraries and brought by the Claimant Susanne Girdler. The Welsh Ministers are not a defendant or a party in the case and have not intervened in the case but are referred to in the case given responsibilities under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act. These responsibilities include the superintendence and promotion of improvement of public libraries in Wales.

Background

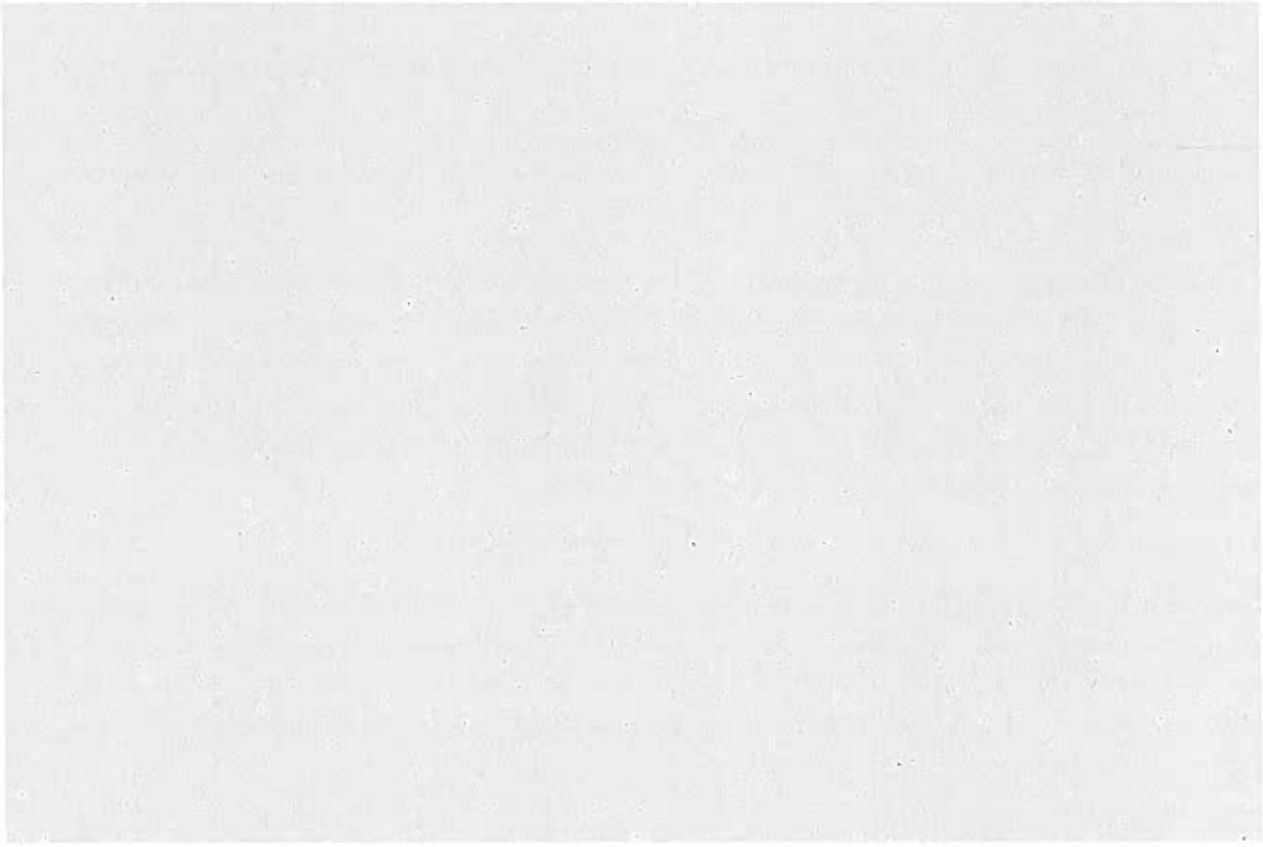
Caerphilly CBC consulted on Caerphilly Library Service Draft Vision 2024-2028 in two phases. A report outlining the results and recommendations was published for discussion on 12 May 2025 by Joint Scrutiny Committee and decision by Special Cabinet on 14 May 2025. Cabinet voted in favour of the recommendations to approve the strategy, the development of Tier 1 and Tier 2 hubs and to close the 10 library service points by 31 August 2025.

Within the report, the Council proposed the closure of 10 sites, with the option of community asset transfer, release from leases or set up of independent community libraries. Compulsory redundancies were not expected, as some posts were fixed term contracts and staff had expressed interest in early retirement or voluntary severance.

In Wales, we annually assess the performance of all library services using the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS). Assessment of Caerphilly's performance for 2025–26 against the WPLS is currently ongoing, but initial assessments indicate that the current service in Caerphilly has been assessed favourably by the independent assessors[1]. The 2024-25 Annual Assessment Report stated that "Caerphilly Library Service continues to perform well in many areas. The service offers a wide range of well-attended activities, including support for customers who have special requirements." Based on this assessment and in benchmarking their performance alongside other authorities, there are currently no concerns regarding Caerphilly's performance against the framework. It is likely that should the proposed changes be taken forward, there would be reduction in performance against the WPLS, however this will not be fully known until assessment for 2027-28.

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[1] WPLS assessment reports 2025-26 have not been approved or published yet, this information is for WG internal use only



Public interest remains high and the judgement has been reported in the press.

Judge rejects legal challenge to Caerphilly library closures - BBC News

Libraries set to close after campaigners' legal action fails

Further advice will be provided to the Minister in respect of the decision in due course.

Lines to take (which have been agreed with REDACTED and Comms)

- *We are aware of the recent judgment in the judicial review brought against Caerphilly County Borough Council in relation to library services. We are considering the judgment and will not be making any comment at this time.*