

THE CABINET TUESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2016

Present-

Councillors: Dyfed Wyn Edwards, Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Peredur Jenkins, John Wynn Jones, Dafydd Meurig, W. Gareth Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas and Mandy Williams-Davies

Also present:

1. APOLOGIES

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.

An apology was received from Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4TH OCTOBER 2016

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 14 October 2016, as a true record.

6. CLOSURE OF OFFICES AT FRONDEG, PWLLHELI AND BEACH ROAD, FELINHELI

The item was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig.

RESOLVED

Proceed with the closure of Frondeg, Pwllheli early in the 2017/18 financial year and sell it on the open market as soon as possible in order to enable the financial savings to be achieved in full by 2018/19, with the Department bridging the deficit in the meantime.

Allow the use of up to £30,000 of the capital receipts from the sale of the building to fund one-off re-location costs.

Reduce the space leased by the Council at Beach Road, Felinheli in order to reduce the annual expenditure.

Achieve the remainder of the cut by leasing further space at Penrallt Offices, Caernarfon.

DISCUSSION

Referring to the intention to move some of the larger Council committees from Frondeg to Neuadd Dwyfor, the issue of parking arose, as the Penlan car park is very full, especially during the summer. In response, it was noted that some flexibility might be necessary when scheduling meetings, advising people to arrive in good time. It was also noted that the response of the Dwyfor area Members to the plans had been positive and that the only observation received so far was in regard to the parking. It was suggested that a shortage of parking spaces would encourage members to share cars and thus reduce their carbon footprint.

In response to a question regarding the sale of Frondeg, it was confirmed that arrangements were in place to inform other Council departments about this opportunity before placing the building on the open market.

The proposal to relocate the Cylch Meithrin to the primary school was welcomed as this would improve the provision. It was also noted that moving Council committees to Neuadd Dwyfor would strengthen the use of this resource in future.

7. REQUEST FOR RESOURCES FROM THE TRANSFORMATION FUND

The item was submitted by Councillor Mair Rowlands.

RESOLVED

To invest £50,000 on a one-off basis from the Transformation Fund to develop an outline business case to assess potential business options for the Leisure service.

DISCUSSION

In response to an enquiry as to what would next take place, it was explained that a business case would be created between now and the end of March and that a further report would be subsequently submitted allowing opportunity to consider any further necessary investment in relation to that business case.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES ANNUAL REPORT

The report was submitted by Cllr Peredur Jenkins.

RESOLVED

To approve the annual report and adopt the People Plan.

DISCUSSION

Emphasis was placed on the fact that the People Plan did not belong to the Resources Service but to the Council as a whole.

The work that's under way in the department to promote well being and development among staff was welcomed.

An enquiry was made as to whether there was parity in the wages of men and women and whether this was monitored and conveyed in a sensible way. Responding to this, it was explained that this year, for the second time since adopting the pay agreement and the introduction of the collective agreement in 2008, a request had been made to have an independent consultant conduct an assessment of the Council's progress on this. When the first assessment was conducted three years ago, it was very positive; but it was acknowledged that the situation was unavoidable and that efforts should be made within the Council to close the gap. It was hoped that the Council's actions over the past few years had closed the gap further and that this would be reflected in the consultant's next report. It was further noted that this update could be submitted to the Cabinet later on in the year.

It was noted that it would be useful, when submitting future annual reports, to see how many women worked at different levels within the Council, what the barriers were and what the Council could do to help women overcome those barriers. In response, the Chief Executive referred to the figure in the report for the Corporate Leadership Team's remit which showed that 61% were women and 39% were men, reflecting the opportunities.

The Chief Executive noted that equal pay was a contentious issue, which could sometimes be misinterpreted. He emphasised that the Council's pay system awarded the exact same wage for the same work through the use of an objective system of measuring the nature of any post within the Council. Having said that, a higher percentage of women who worked for the Council worked part time and, as such, the average income received by women would be so much lower. This differed from the question of paying an equal wage for the same work. It was also noted that the Council had equal pay protection and that no application had been received since before 2008 and that the protection set up in 2008 was very robust.

Surprise was expressed as to the substantial increase in the number of posts that had been re advertised. In response, it was noted that the aim of the annual report was to highlight such matters in a comprehensible way and that it was important to obtain the data on a regular basis in order to see the trends.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial to know how much sickness leave was short term and how many illnesses lasted for more than four days. It was also noted that the 38.4% of staff who had not been absent at all due to sickness

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during the past year were very valuable people, and it was suggested that they should possibly be awarded in some way e.g. through a letter from the Leader / Chief Executive or line manager, or by awarding their attendance in a ceremony such as the Council at its Best.

Concern was expressed as to the strain on school staff, and it was emphasised that, not only did those people who were on leave from work due to stress need to be looked at but also those who continued to work under stress.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial to undertake further analysis of sickness leave in order to see which months of the year corresponded to the highest levels of sickness and why.

It was noted that the report was easy to read and clearly showed that the Council's most important resource was its people. It was also noted that the People Plan was readable and understandable and showed that all the work involving Council staff stemmed from putting the people of Gwynedd first.

It was noted that new staff members were expected to sign up to the People Plan, but that it was also necessary to consider what was expected of those staff members who had been working for the Council for many years.

Everyone involved with the work of producing the report and the People Plan was thanked, and it was noted that the implementation of the plan was awaited with anticipation.

9. PERFORMANCE REPORT: CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The report was submitted by Cllr John Wynn Jones.

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

Referring to the new arrangement of charging a fee for disposing garden waste, it was suggested that people should be made aware of the fact that they had other options, such as composting.

It was noted that there was room to take pride in the further increase in the percentage of recycled waste from 58.70% in 2015/16 to 62.75% by the end of July this year; and the Cabinet Member was asked to send a message to residents to thank them for their efforts.

10. PERFORMANCE REPORT: CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND REGULATORY

The report was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig.

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

11. PERFORMANCE REPORT: DEPUTY LEADER

The item was submitted by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn.

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn noted that, further to including the written report, he had met with Alun Davies, AM, and his officers and that he looked forward to developing the relationship with the Minister in future. He also reported that he had prepared a response to the Government's draft strategy 'A Million Welsh Speakers by 2050' and that this response had received the approval of the Language Committee and had been sent to the Minister.

Cllr Mair Rowlands noted that she welcomed the opening of the new Language Centre in Bangor and thanked the Council for all its support in achieving this goal.

A question was posed as to how the impact of the language activities would be measured. In response, it was noted that the aim was to increase people's confidence in using the Welsh language but that measuring success or otherwise was no easy matter. At present, the Council was measuring the number of people who had attended various events. However, this was not a good measure as it did not show whether this had led to an increase in usage. Discussions were held with language planners, but there would be no easy answer to the question. It was important, nevertheless, that the Council continue to seek an answer and do everything in its power to try to boost people's confidence in using the Welsh language. It was also suggested that, if it was difficult to measure the impact, focus should rather be placed on depicting what was meant by success.

It was noted that the Language Charter had been extended throughout north Wales by now and that the Government was looking forward to extending it across the whole of Wales. Council staff and schools were thanked for their work on this innovative plan and pride was taken in the fact that the children of the county had been buoyed to prepare their own action plans for the Charter.

The lack of consistency in the bilingual provision by train services was referred to and a suggestion was made to send letters or request a meeting with Welsh Government to pressure them to ensure that publications on the trains and in stations were bilingual and that the pronunciation of Welsh place names was correct.

Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn noted that he would like to congratulate Cllrs Elin Walker Jones and Mair Rowlands on their hard work in establishing Menter Iaith Bangor and wished them well for the new language centre.

12. PERFORMANCE REPORT: CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES

The report was submitted by Cllr Mandy Williams-Davies.

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

Pride was taken in the fact that North Wales had been placed fourth on the Lonely Planet's list of regions to visit and that there would doubtless be economic benefits to the area as a result of this.

It was also noted that Zipworld was among the companies from Gwynedd in receipt of the Twf Wales 50 award this year.

It was noted that the Porthmadog Innovation Hub, which offers new collaborative space for small businesses at the Old Library for a reasonable fee, was an innovative and highly valuable scheme.

At the end of the meeting, the Chair noted that Sophie Hughes, who had been supporting the Cabinet for some time, had been appointed to a new post with the Language Commissioner. She was thanked for all her work and was wished well for the future.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.55 pm

CHAIRMAN