

THE CABINET TUESDAY, 2 JANUARY 2018

Present-

Councillors: Mair Rowlands, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Peredur Jenkins, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, W. Gareth Roberts, Gareth Thomas and Ioan Thomas

Also present: Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Rhun ap Iarhes (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Dewi Morgan (Senior Manager - Revenue and Risk)

Item 5: Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Regulatory Department)

Item 6: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department)

Item 7: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department)

1. APOLOGIES

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn and Cllr Craig ab Iago.

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. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The item was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report and to reduce the savings target for travelling savings from £390,000 to £240,000 and to move the delivery year from 2018/19 to 2019/20, however, requesting for the scheme to be implemented before 1 April 2019 if it is ready.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that it was a report that noted the latest information

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about the Department. It was emphasised that, when looking at the financial situation, the Department had now realised, or was on track with, 97% of the existing Savings Plans. Nevertheless, it was explained that there would possibly be a slight slippage in two schemes, namely the Review of Smallholding Rents and Public Protection - Charging a Fee for Offering Advice but it was anticipated that the savings would be realised in full by 2018/19.

In addition to discovering the department's savings, the Environment Department was responsible for leading a project across the Council to reduce travelling costs in future. Having received an External Audit of the costs, an external company had suggested that there was a potential saving of £390,000 to be made. Additional work carried out internally showed that this sum had been overestimated and that the sum therefore needed to be reduced to £240,000, and it was noted that further work needed to be undertaken before it could be realised and, therefore, there was a need to re-profile the saving.

By looking at the Department's performance, it was noted that work had been carried out to develop graphs when looking at performance. Specifically, the 'Percentage of customers who stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the level of the Planning service' graph was examined. It was expressed that there had been a fall during the period but, on the whole, the accumulative response showed a better picture of how the department was performing. It was explained that when there were major changes in the graphs, it would be possible to ask why and to look at the data in more detail.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Customer satisfaction and the level of planning service was discussed, in particular why some applications had taken years. It was emphasised that these applications were quite large and the Redrow estate in Bangor was used as an example. It was emphasised that these applications were quite large and the Redrow estate in Bangor was used as an example.
- It was asked where Gwynedd was in terms of staff and time compared to other counties in regard to food hygiene inspections. It was noted that the Cabinet Member would follow this up with the service.
- It was asked whether there was a decline in performance as a result of the cuts the Department had made during recent years, and it was asked whether this was a matter we should be more concerned about in general. It was noted that the service was only slightly behind schedule in this example, and we would not be able to see the true impact until we would have reached the end of the year. If we would see performance failing to keep up, then there may be a need to ask whether we had gone too far, but if we could cope by the end of the year or if we were very close to the previous performance, we must accept that reducing resources would hinder performance. The question to ask, however, was what were the implications of this.
- Attention was drawn to the fact that many of the targets were lower than expected as a result of sickness absence. It was asked whether there was a need to look further into this as it was something that was brought up more often now, looking specifically at staff workload. It was noted that the Council's general sickness levels stayed quite consistent (as could be seen in the report of the Deputy Leader) but, following the savings, a number of Departments had had to get rid of staff and therefore, when a member of staff who did something essential was sick from work, there was not as much resilience in order to be able to move someone to do the work. It was expressed that there was a need to keep an eye on this.

6. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

The item was submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report as well as approve and re-profile the delivery of £263,000 of the "Schools' Additional Savings" scheme, which was to realise £4.3m in savings in the 2015/16 to 2018/19 period, by slipping £65,000 to be realised in 2021/22 and £198,000 to be realised in 2020/21.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Cabinet Member was comfortable with performance on the whole, but some fields needed more work. The Member guided everyone through the report, highlighting some matters. It was noted that, when looking at Improving and Standardising Education Standards in the Foundation Phase, the summer 2018 results had been static for the third year and Gwynedd had been placed in 15th place nationally. He expressed that Gwynedd should be in fourth or fifth place, and therefore the results were disappointing. The Department had commissioned GwE to consider the situation.

By looking at the Programme for a Network of Viable Schools for the Future: Bangor Project, it was noted that the discussions had been held with the area's Headteachers, governors and councillors to discuss options. By now, the favoured option had been identified at the Catchment Area Review Committee, and it would be presented at the Cabinet in February.

The summer results were discussed, noting that the performance of Key Stage 4 and GCSE results were disappointing this year as there had been a fall in the performance. However, it was emphasised that these results reflected the fall nationally. The main reason for the fall was the changes to the examining system and the specification for subjects such as Mathematics and English that had significantly impacted the GCSE results for Wales.

It was noted that the expected savings that would derive from re-organisation schemes would be delivered later than expected, but rather than asking the schools to face the burden in the meantime, it was noted that it would be more sensible to re-profile the expected saving.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that Improving and Standardising Education Standards provided a foundation for the Department and was one of the main projects. The result was specifically low in the Foundation Phase and it was asked when a report would be submitted to the Cabinet to ensure that the standard of education would improve. It was expressed that the department had commissioned GwE to look at the matter but there had been some delay with doing the work. In addition, it was noted that when looking at the standards of the Foundation Phase, the results were lower as a result of Language. The teaching was through the medium of Welsh and many of the children came from non-Welsh speaking homes and may not have had a grasp of the language by the time they were seven years old. However, by looking at the standards of 11 year old children, the levels were much higher because they had had a grasp of the language by this age.
- It was asked whether the reason that some schools had not reached the standards was a lack of clear leadership. It was expressed that there was a Performance and Management Improvement Plan to develop good leaders but a lack of numbers applying for the jobs was also emphasised. The Department was working closer with colleges in order to develop future leaders. It was noted

that it was a challenge but that the project was now much more specific, and hopefully it would be possible to report back to the Cabinet in March.

- It was expressed that early reviews of Ysgol Bro Idris were positive but it was asked when assessing concerns in the process of creating the All-through Catchment Area School would take place. It was emphasised that this school was innovative and that there were definitely lessons to be learnt, and work had been commissioned in order to specifically look at the development phase.
- The Bala Learning Campus was discussed, emphasising the community resources. It was noted that there was concern in the community in Bala that these community resources were outside the Education Department's usual work and it was asked whether the Economy and Community Department had any input. It was noted that relevant officers from the Department were on the Project Board which gave much attention to the community element.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER

The report was presented by Cllr Mair Rowlands

DECISION

In order to ensure effective and transparent performance management, Cabinet Members are required to report periodically on the performance of the field for which they are responsible to the Cabinet.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted by noting that the Deputy Leader was generally happy with the progress in the projects of the Corporate Support Department. Attention was drawn to the fact that by looking at Keeping the Benefit Local, the Department was now reporting on revenue expenditure only, and excluded capital expenditure.

It was noted that there had been some progress when looking at the Audit of the Welsh Language's situation in Gwynedd Council due to internal staffing circumstances. Nevertheless, language awareness sessions had been held, questionnaires had been shared out and a discussion had been held to arrange suitable training. It was emphasised that the work of developing the Language Strategy was ongoing.

It was expressed that Ffordd Gwynedd training sessions for managers were continuing, and 70 had attended by the end of 2017. It was noted that managers would have been immersed in the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd, ensuring that they understood the relevant concepts. The intention was that all managers would have attended the course by the end of 2017/18.

Since the Cabinet had received the Self-Service Business Project Plan during October, a number of services were available on-line to Gwynedd residents.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The Ffordd Gwynedd training was discussed and it was noted that it was very important that the training was properly embedded, and it was asked whether there would be any follow-up training. It was noted that sessions were held four months after the training in order to see how things were going. It was expressed that it was one thing to understand it, but that it was something else to actually do something about it. When we would know what difference the development sessions made, we would need to consider where we would go next.
- It was asked whether it was the Cabinet Members' responsibility in the Performance Challenge Meetings to ensure that the operation of Ffordd

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Gwynedd would take place. It was suggested that it would be a good idea to ask which managers had been on the training therefore when there would be an opportunity to challenge their performance, there would be a possibility of asking at that time what had been done as a result of the training. It was expressed that Ffordd Gwynedd was a culture that needed to be permeated throughout the Council and Cabinet Members had a role to play to show that it was important to them.

The meeting commenced at 13:00 and concluded at 14:40

CHAIRMAN