

THE CABINET 17/09/19

Present-

Councillors: Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Dilwyn Morgan, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas, Catrin Elen Wager and Cemlyn Rees Williams

Also present:

Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director) and Annes Sion (Member Support Officer).

Item 5: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department)

Item 6: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department) and Gwern ap Rhisiart (Dwyfor/Meirion Area Education Officer)

Item 7: Steffan Jones (Head of the Highways and Municipal Department) and Peter Simpson (Streetscene Manager)

Item 8: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager)

1. APOLOGIES

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.
Apologies were received from Councillors Dyfrig Siencyn and Gareth Griffith.

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 16 AND 23 JULY 2019

The Chair signed the minutes of the meetings held on 16 and 23 July as a true record.

6. ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT REPORT

Presented by Cllr Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

The annual report for 2018/19 was approved.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the report had been submitted annually since 2016. It was expressed that the report submitted was a full report on the Council's workforce. It was added that staff numbers had remained stable over the previous years, although the number of staff members working full time had increased, while the number of part-time staff members had decreased.

Attention was drawn to the age profile of Council staff, which outlined that 37.5% were over 50 years of age, and it was added that there were plans to look at this in more detail along with developing a young workforce. It was expressed that women in Leadership was one of the Council's priorities within its Council Plan, and it was emphasised that women needed to be encouraged into exciting opportunities to develop.

It was noted that the sickness absence per head had increased to 9.45 in 2018/19, but that the Council was still one of the lowest amongst Welsh local authorities. It was further noted that this number was the average across the Council, and that work was being done in the services where the numbers were highest. It was noted that, over the years, the main reason for sickness had been stress; however, it was expressed that work had been undertaken and staff were now more willing to talk about mental health.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that, in terms of Recruitment and Appointment, problems had arisen with regard to attracting applicants to work in some fields such as care and social work; however, efforts had been made to look into these matters. It was emphasised that 12 apprentices were starting at the Council in the upcoming weeks, and that four of these were specifically in the Adults, Health and Well-being field.
- A discussion was held about the fact that the turnover percentage remained relatively low. It was noted that with the age profile demonstrating an increase, there was a need to monitor and keep an eye to ensure service continuation.
- It was expressed that staff numbers remained quite consistent following years of cuts, and it was noted that there was a need to look into these figures further in order to understand how this had happened. The Chief Executive noted that he suspected that it was something to do with the number of grants received, but that he would look into it in order to ensure that we understood why.

7. YSGOL ABERSOCH

The report was submitted by Cllr Cemlyn Williams

DECISION

It was resolved to grant permission to commence formal discussions with the governing body and other relevant stakeholders of Ysgol Abersoch, to enable the formulation of a range of potential options relating to the school's future.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that pupil numbers at Ysgol Abersoch over recent years had been generally low, although a recent fall had meant that there were now nine pupils attending the school. It was expressed that the projections for the coming years anticipated that only nine pupils would be on the school roll in September 2021.

It was expressed that it would be irresponsible for the Council not to look at the School and, consequently, it was timely to commence formal discussions with the governing body and other relevant stakeholders with regard to the future of the school.

The Education Officer added that Ysgol Abersoch was a school for children aged between 3 and 8 years old. It was expressed that their inspection in June 2017 showed that the school's performance was 'Good' and Welsh Government had placed the school in the 'Yellow' support category. It was explained that the school had a capacity of 34, but that the school had not been full since 1981. Attention was drawn to the fact that there had been an increase in the school's numbers in 2016, but that there had been a decline in recent years.

It was emphasised that Welsh Government did not identify Ysgol Abersoch as a Rural School, but the Education Department would follow the School Organisation Code.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was expressed that a high percentage of children in the catchment area did not go to Ysgol Abersoch, and it was noted that this would be explored further during the discussion.
- It was emphasised that the Council would ensure that the Department followed the School Organisation Code

8. WASTE ENFORCEMENT SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION REPORT

Presented by Cllr Catrin Wager

DECISION

It was resolved to implement the recommendations of the investigation of the Communities Scrutiny Committee working group which included the following:

- To use the powers of the Environmental Protection Act (1990), Sections 46 to 47ZA, which relate to waste containers, to fine residents and businesses who dispose of their waste on the wrong day or in the wrong way, as a matter of priority.
- To undertake a county-wide promotion campaign to raise awareness of the waste and recycling arrangements, focusing specifically on the City of Bangor and to acknowledge the geographical and demographic differences within the county at different times of the year.
- To place "QR Code" stickers on recycling receptacles to allow 24 hour access to residents to their waste and recycling collection days and information on items that can be recycled.
- To formalise collaboration arrangements between Council Departments.
- To raise awareness of the Clinical Collections Services and Collection Assistance Service available for older people and disabled people to dispose of their waste. This can be done as part of the broader promotion campaign.

To promote the current network of Recycling Centres and hold a specific campaign to promote the Bulky Waste Collection Service.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the report had derived from a notice of motion by the former Councillor, Lesley Day, at the Full Council in March 2017. It was added that the matter had been referred to the Communities Scrutiny Committee, that decided to hold a Scrutiny Investigation.

The Scrutiny Investigation was submitted, noting that it was a thorough investigation that had engaged with a wide range of Gwynedd residents. Attention was drawn to the recommendations, and it was expressed that specific focus had been given to the City of Bangor, as the problems there would need to be addressed in a slightly different way.

It was expressed that the recommendations noted the use of the powers of the Environmental Protection Act, which included sections where it would be possible to charge residents and businesses a fine. It was emphasised that there would be clear steps in place before fines would be issued to residents and businesses, which included holding discussions with the individuals. It was noted that the proposed recommendations were fair and practical.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the majority of residents put their bins away after they were emptied, but it was added that there were cases to be seen where bins were put back in a disorderly manner by the workforce. It was asked whether there were steps to mitigate this as well. It was expressed that steps were currently being taken to amend the workforce's work pattern; through this, it was hoped that it would mitigate the problems that arose in terms of missed collections and complaints.

- It was expressed that it was very good that the Cabinet was working jointly with the Scrutiny Committee, and it was noted that the steps encouraged working with communities. It was expressed that there had been cuts to the department in recent years, and therefore there was a need to ensure that resources were available for the scheme.
- It was emphasised that 40% of the county's houses were holiday homes, and therefore it was asked whether there was a procedure in place to manage them. It was noted that if the Holiday Homes paid business rates, the service charged a fee for collecting waste, and there had been trials in Abersoch, working with Holiday Home Agencies to ensure that waste was collected, for a fee, on specific days.
- Attention was drawn to the value of the equality procedure in the investigation, as it was extremely important that no unfair fine was given to anyone.
- It was emphasised that some areas needed clear plans where there were no locations available to keep the bins. It was also noted that there was a need to work with Landlords, specifically in the Bangor area. It was expressed that the policy emphasised that the tenants would be fined; however, the Landlord could be fined if the correct equipment was not available to the tenants.
- A concern was raised about elderly and vulnerable people, and assurance was requested that they would not be immediately fined. It was noted that this would not happen, and it was noted that the department hoped that by having specific teams working in areas, a relationship could be developed with the residents of those areas.
- It was noted that it would be a good idea to send a letter to the former Councillor Lesley Day, noting the steps that had been taken following her notice of motion

9. SAVINGS OVERVIEW: PROGRESS REPORT ON REALISING SAVING SCHEMES

Presented by Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

To note the information within the report and to note the encouraging progress towards realising the savings' schemes for 2019/20 and previous years.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that this was a report that was submitted regularly to the Cabinet to provide an overview of the savings situation following the performance reports of the Cabinet Members submitted in July. It was expressed that £32m in savings had been approved to be realised since 2015/16.

It was added that 96% of the savings schemes from 2015/16 to 2018/19 had now been realised. It was expressed that there had been some slippage in some schemes, and that these were mainly from 2017/18. Attention was drawn to

schemes that had slipped in the Education Department, Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Children and Supporting Families Department.

It was noted that from the savings scheme for 2019/20, 36% of the schemes had been realised, and another 34% were on track to being realised in full and on time by the end of the financial year. It was expressed that 24 schemes were either slipping, or had risks with regard to being realised, and that three schemes were yet to receive approval by the Cabinet. Attention was drawn to the schemes that had a risk in terms of being realised; it was expressed that the Cabinet Members felt that the progress that was being made was reasonable, but that the signs of difficulties with realising the schemes were highlighted. It was emphasised that every effort would be made to attempt to realise the schemes that had slipped, and that Cabinet Members would continue to monitor the situation.

It was emphasised that in October, all departments would report to their Scrutiny Committee on how they intended to cope with any deficit that needed to be addressed in their savings schemes.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was expressed that the Council had now been making efficiency savings for over 10 years, but that it was becoming more difficult.
- It was noted that one of the risks seen by the Highways and Municipal Service was the 'scheme to increase street enforcement income by fining more individuals who drop litter', but it was expressed that discussions were being held about this.
- It was expressed that the report was an overview, and that it was becoming more difficult to discover savings, but it would be possible to look at the situation properly after gaining a greater understanding of the settlement in October / November 2019.
- The likely settlement was discussed, noting that more funding would be given to services by the UK Government, but that the Council's settlement depended on how Welsh Government would allocate that funding. It was expressed that there was a need to send a message to Welsh Government, calling on them to fund pay and pension inflation, and it was suggested that the austerity was possibly not over.
- It was noted that there was a need to congratulate the Council on their work and the fact that 96% of the plans had been realised.

10. POOLED BUDGET AGREEMENT FOR CARE HOME ACCOMMODATION FOR OLDER PEOPLE 2019/20

Presented by Cllr Dafydd Meurig and Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

It was resolved to note the report and to note the progress made regionally in meeting the Part 9 requirements of the 2014 Act which includes a legal requirement to establish a regional pooled fund for care home accommodation

for older people.

The establishment of a non-risk sharing pooled fund was approved for care home accommodation for older people, as noted in the report, with Denbighshire County Council acting as host authority, and for the arrangements to be effective for the 2019/20 financial year.

Approval was given for the Council to enter into a legal agreement between Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and the six local authorities across North Wales to regulate the establishment, operation and governance arrangements in respect of the pooled fund for a period of three years.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the Social Services and Well-being Act required the region to set up a pooled fund of regional expenditure for care homes for older people. It was expressed that it was a technical matter and that arrangements were in place to fulfil the legislative requirements.

It was added that pressure came from Welsh Government for the region to progress with the pooled budget. It was expressed that the agreement reduced the financial risk to the partners. It was reiterated that minor changes had been made to the agreement, but in relation to the timetable and not the principles.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Dissatisfaction was noted by a number of the members about the way the Government had forced us to follow this route, which was premature.

11. MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Submitted by Dilwyn Williams

DECISION

It was resolved not to fill the vacant post of Corporate Director in order to see whether it was possible to do without the post.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, emphasising that it was a follow-up to the report discussed in May. In that report, it was expressed that the Cabinet was required to consider whether two Corporate Directors were required, in addition to a Chief Executive. It was emphasised in May that more evidence was required before being able to do with less on this tier, but the cost of dismissing in order to experiment would be enormous. Consequently, it was determined in May that the number of Directors should not be reduced, and that the situation be considered further if the opportunity arose to experiment without dismissal costs.

It was expressed that one Director post was now vacant, which provided the

opportunity to experiment to see whether it would be possible to cope with a Chief Executive and one Director. It was emphasised that it was a reasonable step in order to gather evidence to see whether it was possible to cope without the second Director post before making a decision for the future.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.20 pm

CHAIRMAN