

THE CABINET TUESDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2021

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L Siencyn, Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Griffith, Nia Jeffreys, Dilwyn Morgan, Ioan Thomas, Gareth Thomas, Catrin Wager and Cemlyn Williams.

Also present-

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department) and Annes Siôn (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 6: Steffan Jones (Head of Highways and Municipal Department)

Item 7: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Manager), Llywela Owain (Senior Scrutiny and Language Advisor) and Meinir Owen (Senior Projects Practitioner).

Item 8: Aled Gibbard (Senior Operational Manager - Care Resources)

Item 9: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager)

Item 10: Catrin Thomas (Assistant Head of Supporting Families)

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.
No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

A declaration of personal interest was received from Cllr Catrin Wager on item 8, it was stated that it was a prejudicial interest and she left the meeting during the discussion on this item.

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 9 NOVEMBER

The Chair accepted the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021 as a true record.

6. CLEAN AND TIDY COMMUNITIES TEAM

The item was presented by Cllr Catrin Wager

RESOLVED

To approve establishing a Clean and Tidy Communities Team to carry out minor maintenance work and to complement the regular maintenance activities.

An allocation of £1,523,730 was approved from the Transformation Fund to finance the team and its associated costs on a one-off basis for a period of three years to commence as soon as possible.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that street cleanliness had been a regular complaint that Councillors had to deal with. It was explained that this report requested substantial support to improve street cleanliness, noting that residents did not want to see overflowing bins, weeds and litter. It was noted that this was the exact reason why cleanliness had been noted as one of the Council's priorities.

It was expressed that the first step of engaging with areas had been completed and the observations that had been raised across the county were highlighted. It was explained that the department was already undertaking such work but that the service had been cut in order to realise savings over the years. However, between cuts and adaptations to the department as a result of the pandemic, it was explained that it needed to be prioritised.

It was noted that the funding would be used to create five teams to visit an area to undertake maintenance work, and to add the finishing touch by weeding, picking up litter, cleaning and painting. It was explained that these teams would be responsive, reactive and able to face things on a seasonal basis. It was expressed that communication was essential to ensure that Councillors and Community Councils were aware of when the team would be in their area.

It was emphasised that evidence highlighted the importance of this plan, which progressed to investing in improvements for Gwynedd communities.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The report was welcomed, noting that street cleanliness was the matter that was mostly raised with Councillors.
- Support was expressed noting that people would show more respect to communities, as residents and tourists, if communities were clean and tidy.
- It was noted that residents and the public also had a responsibility to keep their communities tidy, but there was also a need to ensure communication with Town Councils.
- The need to have the cooperation of communities was also noted and to undertake preparation work in advance.

To approve an allocation of £1,523,730 from the Transformation Fund to provide the necessary budget and its associated costs on a one-off basis for a period of three years to commence as soon as possible.

7. HUNANIAITH BUSINESS CASE

The item was presented by Cllr Nia Jeffreys

RESOLVED

To approve a commitment of £203,880 from the Transformation Fund to fund an additional post for a four-year period to manage the service and improve Hunaniaith's position as a unit within the Council for the time being, to focus on attracting new grants and raising an income, improve community contact, attract more community members to the Strategic Group and work towards being an independent entity.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that it was a technical report that laid the foundations of a business case to realise an aspiration and vision for Hunaniaith to become an independent body in future. The importance of using the Welsh language as a community language was highlighted.

It was explained that creating this business case was a step forward in the journey, and by appointing a Chief Officer to lead this work it would be an opportunity to attract grants and to establish the body as an independent entity. Officers were thanked for their work to try to realise the vision.

The Head of Corporate Support Department noted that the report was recognition of work that had been undertaken following the Cabinet's decision and that it was a practical method to establish Hunaniaith as an independent entity allowing time to secure fixed long-term funding sources.

The Senior Scrutiny and Language Advisor explained that the Chair of Hunaniaith was supportive of the report and continued to believe that Hunaniaith would be better as an independent entity but the work had to be undertaken on a step-by-step basis and that this decision was part of the journey.

The Senior Projects Practitioner added that there was currently no certainty of grants as an independent entity and, therefore, as a result it was a better idea to have a Chief Officer to develop and to secure grant stability.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Support was noted to the report emphasising that it was an opportunity for Hunaniaith to undertake preparatory work and to pave the way forward by seeking grants to achieve this vision. It was expressed that it should not be grant-led.
- It was noted that Gwynedd's robustness was its language and it was explained that this was why Hunaniaith was possibly not a separate entity. However, it was emphasised that the language was under threat here in Gwynedd as in the whole of Wales and, therefore, appointing a Chief Officer would lead the work and ensure that more work was undertaken in communities.

8. **AUTISM PLAN 2021-23**

The report was submitted by Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

RESOLVED

The Autism Plan 2021-23 was approved.

It was agreed to prejudge the annual bids process and approve a bid for £48,000 from the permanent revenue budget now, in order to fund the post of Autism Co-ordinator and two Social Work posts at an annual cost of £144,000 with the Council contributing a third of the cost.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that this Autism Plan was one of the Council Plan projects and it was one of the department's improvement plans. It was noted that this was a partnership project between the Council, the Health Service and the Isle of Anglesey County Council. Despite the challenges that had faced the three partners during the pandemic, it was emphasised that submitting this report showed its importance.

It was expressed that it had been a long journey although it would never end as it was a live strategy that would constantly respond and adapt. It was noted that the Plan had been submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee that was very supportive and had committed to provide an input to the regular review.

The Senior Operational Manager added that this plan was a priority and it was recognised that the work had been influenced by a complaint made about the department that was forwarded to the Ombudsman. It was explained that the department had appointed an external consultant to examine the reports by the Ombudsman and to examine the work and this input had been key to develop the plan. Attention was drawn to the Code of Conduct introduced in September noting that the plan corresponded to this Code of Conduct.

It was emphasised that this plan was the beginning of the journey and it would be an opportunity to identify gaps and to move on more robustly. It was noted that difficult portfolio work would need to be undertaken as information was kept across the partnership. It was explained that an Autism Board would be created in order to review the work for the future.

It was explained that operations were based on three specific steps, namely establishing the Board, to appointing more staff in order to assess earlier and offer training across services, and to nurture a relationship with Autism Services on a regional and national basis to review the work in future. It was emphasised that this document was the beginning of the journey and it would continue to develop.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The report was welcomed highlighting that this plan was cross-departmental with close collaboration with the Education department

9. CHANGE APPROVAL ARRANGEMENTS OF UP TO £100,000 FROM RESERVES

The report was submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

In order to facilitate more flexible spending arrangements, it was decided to delegate power to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Head of Finance Department, to commit sums of up to £100,000 from the Transformation Fund and/or the Covid-19 Recovery Arrangements Fund.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Transformation Fund was used to fund the Council's priorities, which had been included in the Council Plan. It was explained that the fund supported transformational and one-off work.

Back in 2013, in the face of a challenging financial period, it was stated that it had been decided to change the expenditure approval regime from the Transformation Fund, with all claims from the Fund receiving Cabinet approval. After considering the size of the fund, it was now suggested that a revised procedure should be established, because of the need to move forward to achieve priorities without delay, whilst addressing immediate spending needs.

Over £4 million had been earmarked in the Transformation Fund during 2021/22, which meant that the fund balance was £12.5 million on 31 March 2021. As a result of Covid-19, it was explained that a Recovery Arrangements Fund had been established when accounts were closed, and £2.5 million had been earmarked for the fund to assist the Council to recover after the crisis.

It was explained that regular expenditure had been made annually from the Transformation Fund in accordance with Council priorities. Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, it was noted that expenditure was over £7 million. It was stated that current commitments against the Transformation Fund were valued at £5.4 million, which included commitments of over £5 million before the 2021/22 financial year. This meant that £7.2 million of resources were available for the purpose of Council Plan priorities.

In terms of the Covid-19 Recovery Arrangements Fund, it was noted that there were commitments of £430,000, which included £130,000 to upgrade technology to enable remote meetings. It was emphasised that the Cabinet's approval would still be required for priorities above the threshold of £100,000.

10. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SUPPORT

The report was submitted by Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the department was holding positive monthly performance challenge meetings that were constantly evolving. Concerns were highlighted about the department's capacity to be able to input information on a monthly basis but it was explained that the next step would be for managers to take ownership of the monthly reports. Members of the Care Scrutiny Committee who attended the performance challenge meetings were also thanked.

It was noted that the department's priority plans that were seen in the Council Plan continued to progress, and the Strategy for Keeping Families Together was highlighted. However, it was stressed that staffing challenges were seen across the department and had been highlighted in the risk register. In order to address the challenge, it was noted that work was ongoing in collaboration with the Corporate Support department.

It was explained that the element regarding the Autism Strategy was not easy reading but the plan had progressed after writing the report and it had now been discussed at this meeting. Although the workforce capacity was one of the main concerns of the department, it was stated, on the whole, that the department was performing very well.

Despite the staffing challenges, the Assistant Head added that the department had still managed to support and safeguard children ensuring that they could stay at home with their families when possible.

The Corporate Director noted that there was concern about the field particularly in terms of pressures on staff. The staff were thanked for their hard work and for their ability to continue to operate during this difficult period. It was highlighted that staff were performing well despite being under constant pressure. The good relationship between the department and Bangor University and the MA Course in Social Services was highlighted, explaining that this collaboration would continue to ensure that the Council attracted a good number of social workers.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- The department was congratulated for its work to ensure service level but it was enquired how long it would be possible for the department to continue with a shortage of staff. It was noted that there was no easy answer but over the years the Council had done very well in recruiting into the field. Nevertheless, it was stated that many staff members felt that the post was increasingly challenging and there was a need to ensure that staff were not placed under too much pressure. It was explained that there was a national need for the sector to have better profile and recognition for the work they undertake.
- The staff were thanked for their work, not only for the work delivered but

also for a legible and coherent performance report.

11. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The report was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, drawing particular attention to the schemes seen in the Council's Plan. In terms of a suitable and sustainable care provision plan for the future, it was noted that they were satisfied with the work undertaken although there had been a slippage in opening some specific resources such as the dementia unit in Llan Ffestiniog. It was explained that challenges had been faced in Dolgellau in terms of obtaining suitable land for development. However, it was noted that the journey continued and it was stated that a bid would be submitted to obtain additional staff to monitor care homes across the county to ensure quality and sufficient support for providers.

It was explained that the work of re-designing the care service was slightly behind as a result of Covid-19. It was noted that the department hoped to re-tender in January with the hope of obtaining new contracts with providers by the summer.

In terms of the Workforce and Recruitment plan, it was emphasised that it was difficult to tackle. Although the performance table was displayed in green, it was explained that this was not the full picture. It was noted that the recruitment campaign was ongoing and there was a need to re-examine how to recruit people locally, as staff shortages had led to individuals remaining in hospital as no care was available.

In terms of performance, it was noted that the department had not managed to reach a situation where it was possible to hold monthly meetings, and financial challenges were highlighted in terms of finding savings.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Gratitude was expressed for the report and for drawing attention to the element of staff recruitment. It was explained that the situation could be seen across the county and the need to examine the matter was emphasised.
- It was explained that work was underway to review the savings plans across all departments as several found it challenging to achieve them. It was noted that there was a need to examine all plans and examine how to achieve them or seek alternative plans.
- The carers were thanked for their work and it was noted that the Welsh and UK Governments needed to ensure a budget so that it would be possible to pay carers fairly for their work, which made a difference to

individuals' lives.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.40 pm

CHAIRMAN