
THE CABINET TUESDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2024

Present -

Councillors: Nia Jeffreys, Menna Trenholme, Craig ab Iago, Huw Wyn Jones, June Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Llio Elenid Owen, Paul John Rowlinson and R. Medwyn Hughes.

Also present -

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance Department) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

- Item 6: Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Services Department) and Catrin Love (Assistant Head – Corporate Services).
- Item 7: Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Services Department) and Meinir Griffiths (Service Improvement Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and the Officers were welcomed to the meeting by the Leader of the Council.

Gratitude was conveyed to all Council staff who worked to ensure that Gwynedd residents were protected and safe during the recent severe weather caused by storm Darragh. It was reported that there were a number of road closures due to storm damage and a large number of homes and some care homes were affected by power cuts. The care services were thanked, as members of staff worked extended hours to ensure that Gwynedd's most vulnerable individuals continued to receive a service, despite the extreme weather.

Disappointment was expressed that Cyngor Gwynedd had only received a 3.2% increase on last year's budget, following the Welsh Government's announcement of the settlement. It was confirmed that this meant that Cyngor Gwynedd was one of the three Local Authorities in Wales that received the smallest proportion of the settlement for the coming year.

An apology was received from Councillor Dewi Jones.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2024 were accepted as a true record.

6. STAFF WELL-BEING STRATEGY

The report was submitted by Cllr Llio Elenid Owen.

DECISION

To accept the Well-being Plan as a plan for supporting and promoting the well-being of staff over the next few years.

DISCUSSION

Members were reminded that a Staff Well-being Plan was operational and had received a Gold Level Award from the Welsh Government a number of times for the Corporate Health Standard. However, it was explained that the Covid era had led to a number of changes to staff well-being and needs were now quite different to pre-pandemic expectations. It was explained that it was timely to review the Plan in full to ensure that it was up to date and fit for purpose for the future.

It was reported that the Well-being Plan covered a number of duties such as the moral duty to protect the health and well-being of staff. The Plan was also said to address legal duties to protect the safety, health and well-being of staff. It was also explained that there were financial duties within the Well-being Plan to ensure that staff were healthy and content. The costs of sickness absences over the past year had been confirmed at £5.7m.

'A Healthy and Satisfied Workforce' was confirmed as a work stream within the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan as it was a method of attracting new employees, retaining existing employees, lowering sick leave rates and improving the performance and development of Council staff. There was pride in the fact that an entire section of this year's 'Llais Staff' questionnaire focused on staff well-being, the results of which had been input into the plan.

The new Plan was explained as having three foundations, namely 'Leadership and Management', 'Sustainable Support' and 'Work Environment'. It was explained that the 'Leadership and Management' foundation involved the development of Leaders and Managers to better support staff well-being with an emphasis on the core role of Managers to support well-being. It was elaborated that the 'Sustainable Support' foundation ensured that the arrangements that were in place such as counselling offers, physiotherapy, health checks and Occupational Health Unit support continued to offer mental, physical, social and financial well-being support. It was pointed out that the 'Work Environment' foundation focused on workplaces within the Council to ensure that the buildings promoted well-being while also supporting teams if patterns of absences arose.

It was confirmed that the Well-being Plan had followed a consultation process prior to being submitted to the Cabinet as it had received input from the Corporate Management Team, the Health, Safety and Well-being Forum, the Health, Safety and Well-being Panel, the Management Network and Council staff through the 'Llais Staff' questionnaire.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- It was asked whether the sick leave costs were high compared to other Authorities.
 - In response to the question, the Head of Corporate Services Department confirmed that not all Local Authorities reported these numbers. However,

Cyngor Gwynedd's costs were confirmed to be the second lowest given the figures from the 13 Local Authorities disclosing the information.

- The Plan was supported as it led to very important Preventative work. It was emphasised that promoting activities and the support available was vital to the health and well-being of staff. It was added that it was important to receive feedback from staff on these proposals and the Department was thanked for including it within the 'Llais Staff' questionnaire.
- The 'Leadership and Management' foundation was considered to be very important and there was pride that it was a key part of the Plan following the review. It was asked whether the change in attitude and the success of this foundation would be measured as it was a new foundation for the Plan.
 - It was explained that the Well-being Plan was now part of the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan and it was confirmed that an appraisal process was being implemented as part of the monitoring system for that Plan. It was confirmed that this meant that there was a requirement for each department to appraise their development in this foundation on a regular basis.
- It was asked whether it was possible to identify specific Departments or Services that experienced more staff absences than others.
 - In response to the question, the Head of Corporate Services Department confirmed that this data could be found. It was elaborated that an absence management and reporting policy had been adopted this year using the self-service system in order to support the Departments. It was confirmed that this had led to a complete picture of the challenges of staff absences. It was emphasised that further work was underway to identify further interventions and solutions for any services experiencing high absence challenges.

The Head of Department and Assistant Head were thanked for their work in leading the development of the Well-being Plan. Councillor Menna Trenholme was also thanked for her support to the Department in recent years.

7. COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT QUARTER 1-2 2024/25

The report was submitted by Cllr Llio Elenid Owen.

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

It was explained that the report detailed the Council's performance in handling complaints and improving services, in line with the expectation to provide an update to the Cabinet every six months. The report highlighted successes, challenges and developments over the past six months. Attention was drawn to quantitative and qualitative data to measure the Council's performance together with comparative information from recent years.

It was confirmed that the number of Formal Complaints and complaints that have gone to the Ombudsman had decreased in the last six months compared to the same period last year. It was elaborated that a trend over a longer period indicated that the

number of Formal Complaints had decreased steadily between 2018/19 and 2021/22 until there was a significant increase at that time following the pandemic. It was emphasised that the situation continued to stabilise on an annual basis into the pre-Covid situation.

Pride was expressed in a change of culture within the Council, with the majority of Services accepting that complaints were a positive and constructive opportunity to learn lessons. It was also noted that the timespan before responding to complaints with solutions was gradually decreasing. Pride was expressed that the number of complaints about a lack of response or action had fallen by around 50% so far this year, looking at the comparative data.

The Service Improvement Officer was thanked for her tireless work within this field and for working closely with departments receiving complaints, offering training sessions when appropriate.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- There was pride that the Council's culture now dealt with complaints as a tool to improve services and learn lessons.
- It was pointed out that messages of praise were also received regularly by the Departments.
- Cabinet Members were asked to ensure that discussions took place within their departments to strive to find solutions to all existing complaints.
- Specific attention was drawn to the number of formal complaints received within the last six months, noting that 14 complaints had been received, compared to 27 complaints within the same period last year. Similarly, it was confirmed that eight complaints of errors or incorrect actions were received within the last six months compared to 21 in the same period last year.
- It was confirmed that a further report was being submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee shortly to ensure that complaints procedures allowed individuals to lodge a complaint in an appropriate and convenient manner. It was elaborated that a report on a new Customer Care Charter would be submitted to the Cabinet soon, stating that it would confirm what was expected of Council departments. It was explained that the Customer Care Charter would also place expectations on residents and service users as to how complaints were lodged. It was emphasised that these developments would be addressed as the Department reported on the performance of Complaints and Service Improvement (Quarters 3 and 4) in six months' time.

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 1.35pm.

CHAIR