

# CABINET CYNGOR GWYNEDD

## Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

<b>Date:</b>	12 September 2017
<b>Title of Item:</b>	Cabinet Member for Finance
<b>Purpose:</b>	To accept and note the information in the report
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Peredur Jenkins
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Dilwyn Williams, Chief Executive

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on what has been happening in the fields within my remit as Cabinet Member for Finance. This includes outlining the latest developments of promises within the Council's Plan; where we have reached with measuring performance; and the latest in terms of the savings and cuts schemes.
- 1.2 I will remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at a meeting of the Finance Department management team, which also included a representation from the Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 On the whole, I am comfortable with the performance of the projects and performance measures for which I am responsible, or that relevant steps have been taken to improve performance.

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## 2. **THE DECISION SOUGHT**

2.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

## 3. **THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION**

3.1. In order to ensure effective performance management.

## 4. **STRATEGIC PLAN PROJECTS**

### ***Effective and Efficient Council***

#### 4.1. **FfG5 – S Information Technology Strategy (IT)**

4.2.1 Since I last reported, there has been further progress in the work of the Strategy.

4.2.2 **Digital Channel and Facilitating Contact with the Council:** The developments of the digital channel are continuing to be given priority. The channel will be relaunched during the autumn with the introduction of texting services and an App for residents on mobile phones.

4.2.3 **Elected Members:** New computer equipment was introduced to the new Council in May. Some problems were experienced when introducing the new provision to the elected members and as a result I have asked the Service for an analysis of these problems together with the steps intended to be taken in response.

4.2.4 **Innovation:** Work is ongoing which will enable officers from any public organisation using the public sector network in Wales to login to their corporate network from another organisation. There are plans to use this provision to facilitate working in a multi-agency way between the Council and the Health Service with further discussions held nationally for doctors' surgeries in the County.

4.2.5 We are continuing to look at introducing provision to safeguard people via GPS tracking methods. A pilot was held on the National Eisteddfod field with families and children with the setting of boundaries where children could wander off from their parents, but enabling the parents to track the children's movements and to receive a message if the child goes over the safe boundaries. The intention is to use this technology to protect vulnerable adults in the future, and the results of the pilot will allow us to tailor the technology further.

4.2.6 By now we are starting to see schemes within the Strategy being realised and, consequently, facilitating the work of Departments and improving the service provided to the public.

#### 4.3 **C7 Electronic document and records management system (EDRMS)**

4.3.1 In recent months, the system has been introduced to the Environment Department with preparatory work underway in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Children and Supporting Families Department for introduction in September and December.

4.3.2 As I have reported previously, there was some concern that the system was reproducing files instead of clearing and weeding out existing files and folders and setting up a corporate structure. In order to respond to these concerns and

to try to ensure that the system achieves its full potential, a session has been held with the Corporate Management Team and action steps implemented.

## 5 PERFORMANCE

5.1 **Appendix 1** provides a full report on the performance measures related to my portfolio.

5.2 There are 11 Services in the Finance Department. I have challenged the measures of the **Payroll, Finance and Accountancy, Investment and Treasury Management, Income, Taxes** and **Benefits Services** and I am satisfied with the performance.

5.2.1 The **Risk and Insurance Service** supports the Council's departments as they assess the threats and opportunities which they could face when providing their services and prioritise their activities based on the assessment. They also protect the taxpayers' interests by ensuring appropriate insurance arrangements and dealing with claims.

5.2.2 It is noted that the performance of the measure **Protecting the taxpayer's financial interests: Percentage of public accountability claims refused (settled for £0) by the Unit (CD4.01)** has reduced to 66.6% compared with 81.8% and 82.4% for the last two quarters of 2016/17. We successfully defended six claims out of nine made during the period. There were no common aspects between the three cases which have been settled and steps have been taken to respond to this.

5.2.3 The purpose of the **Internal Audit Service** is to give the citizens and the Council confidence in the Council's management environment and governance arrangements by reporting independently and objectively to the Head of Finance and the Audit and Governance Committee.

5.2.4 It is seen that the **Percentage of Audits in the Audit Plan which have either been closed or have a published final report (CD2.03)** has reduced to 3.33% for the first quarter in 2017/18 compared with 17.5% for the same period in 2016/17 and 11.11% in 2015/16. It is noted that staff recruitment problems have contributed to the situation which meant that the unit was two full-time auditors short during the period. I understand that the situation has improved by now and I will be keeping a close eye on the measure in the future.

5.2.5 The **Information Technology Service** supports and enables all the Council's services to serve the residents of Gwynedd in an effective, flexible and secure way. It is seen that the **Percentage of network availability (TG01)** has remained fairly stable, the performance during the period in question being at 99.97% compared with 99.94% in 16/17 and 99.80% in 15/16.

5.2.6 At the last challenging performance meeting we discussed the problems experienced with the Council's computer system for a period in June. It is understood that such problems are not recorded in the measure as it currently stands. Consequently, there are doubts whether we are measuring the right thing and I have asked the Service to consider establishing a new measure regarding people's ability to use the Council's computer systems.

5.2.7 The service is still investigating the reasons for the problems experienced in June. I have asked them to report back to me when they have completed their

investigations and my intention is to report back to you on the findings and the options for creating more resilient systems to try to ensure that such a situation does not arise again in the future.

- 5.2.8 Administrating the Local Government Pension Scheme on behalf of over 40 employers in order to account and pay pensions promptly and accurately is the remit of the **Pensions Service**. Though the performance of the measure **Average number of working days taken to send a letter notifying the value of retirement benefits - estimate (CD9.03)** during the first quarter was the same as the same period in 2016/17 at 7.40 and is a reduction on the figure of 10.00 in 2015/16, it shows an increase from the performance of 4.40 and 4.00 seen in the last two quarters of 2016/17.
- 5.2.9 The reason for this is the fact that resources have been redirected to work on deferred cases as the right information is not always sent to us on time by employers which leads to more work at the end of the year. I have asked the Service to look again at how it can be ensured that the organisations which are members of the scheme notify us of any changes.
- 5.2.10 As a Council, we have a role to ensure that we pay our creditors correctly and on time and it is the **Creditors' Payments Service** that is responsible for this. The performance of the measure **Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days (across the Council) (CD6.01)** has remained static for the first quarter of the year at 89% (as it was for the same period in 16/17 and 15/16) though it is a reduction from the 94% for the same period in 14/15.
- 5.2.11 As you will be aware from my previous reports, steps have been put in place to try to improve the situation but, to date, they don't seem to be having an impact. Therefore, I have suggested that a 'Ffordd Gwynedd' review should be undertaken of our payment arrangements to try to identify an ideal system to deal with invoices. The intention is to start the review in the autumn after the Service Manager has attended the training sessions for managers on the Ffordd Gwynedd principles.

## 6 **FINANCIAL POSITION / SAVINGS**

- 6.1 In 2016/17, 81% of the savings total had been realised with three schemes slipping for specific reasons. By now, one of those has been realised and it is anticipated that another will have been realised by September. In terms of the remaining one (C27-Re-acquire the PSBA network), it has been reported for some time that the solution is the subject of a national conversation. This is continuing and the recent outlooks suggest a likelihood that the savings will be delivered in full but that slippage will occur until 2018/19. With regard to 2017/18 schemes, no delivery problems have been foreseen.
- 6.2 For 2018/19, the Cabinet has approved the re-profiling of cut scheme number 13 (Stop paying the fee to pay Council Tax in post offices) in order to give the Department time to find a solution. The challenge to realise it is as it had been anticipated, but further research to find a solution is continuing.

## 7 **NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

- 7.1 None to note.

## 8 **ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION**

8.1 **Views of the Statutory Officers:**

i. **Monitoring Officer:**

No comments from a propriety perspective.

ii. **Head of Finance Department:**

I confirm the accuracy of the report's contents, and I shall be supporting the Cabinet Member to achieve the relevant objectives.

8.2 **Views of the Local Member:**

8.2.1 Not a local matter.

8.3 **Results of Any Consultation:**

8.3.1 None to note.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix 1 - Performance Measures**