

CABINET REPORT

7 May 2019

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Ioan Thomas
Title:	Council Plan – request for IT Development resources to support <i>Ffordd Gwynedd</i>
Purpose:	Council Plan Projects 2018–2023: A request for funding to meet significant increase in demand for IT software developments as outcomes of <i>Ffordd Gwynedd</i> exercises, designed to improve services delivered to Gwynedd citizens that make up priority number 7 from the plan – “putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything that we do”.
Contact Officer:	Huw Ynyr, IT & Transformation Senior Manager

1. The decision sought

Support is sought for £341,046 (approximately £113,000 per annum for three years) from the Transformation Fund to meet with significant increase in the demand for IT software developments to improve services across the Council due to outcomes from *Ffordd Gwynedd* exercises.

2. Background

The Software Development Unit within the Information Technology Service develop IT solutions for the Council’s services. It’s imperative that the development resources are prioritised on the strength of the requirements following analysis exercises to ensure that we build high quality systems that make a positive difference. Historically, this unit’s demand is high, however, recently due to successful projects on the back of *Ffordd Gwynedd* exercises, the demand is far higher than the ability to deliver.

A prioritisation procedure and associated panel is already established, however, some worthwhile requests will inevitably be delayed due to unavoidable tasks and priority to other developments. Between April 2014 and March 2018, 46% of submitted requests were developed with 54% being rejected or yet to be developed. The situation has worsened since April 2018 with 26% of requests going forward to be developed into a system, whilst 74% remain stagnant without resource.

This pattern will continue as *Ffordd Gwynedd* exercises intensify and the use of technology is stimulated with the continuing success of using IT to improve Council services.

3. How much additional funding is required and why can't the matter be resolved with current resources within the Department?

We're asking for support to create 3 technical posts for 3 years. All posts will be on grade S3 (28-31). The first year will see us introducing 2 software developers and one infrastructure post, whilst introducing measures to raise a fee for any new development to ensure that the infrastructure post will be self-funded in the future. In the short term, this post is needed immediately as recent developments have already put significant strain on the team to support any new developments.

The infrastructure post will continue past the initial year, but by the second year will be funded through contributions from the Council's departments. At the start of the second year, we will transfer the funding to create a third software development post, further increasing our capacity to support the Council in improving our services through introducing technology to support the outputs of *Ffordd Gwynedd* exercises.

The total investment over a period of 3 years from the Transformation Fund is £341,046.

4. What are the plans for the additional funding that you're requesting (i.e. how will the money be spent)?

Introducing 3 software developer posts will significantly improve our ability to react to software development requests. We shall continue to prioritise projects, however, the additional support will result in a heightened ability to ensure that *Ffordd Gwynedd's* objectives are realised, rather than the lack of IT resources encumbering progress.

Even though we're pinpointing specific strain on the software development side, we mustn't forget that these systems are underpinned with the IT infrastructure and supported by the network and server units. An increase in any software developments has direct impact on the support of our infrastructure and it's essential that capacity is increased within this area to support the increase and introduction of new technology. The first year will be funded from the additional funding, whilst we will charge a small percentage as agreed contributions for departments that have benefited from new developments in order to continue with funding the post.

The IT Service has in the past advertised for temporary resources or trainee posts, but we're unable to hold on to these resources due to the strength of the employment market and they see the posts as a stepping stone to better opportunities. In addition to individuals leaving after a relatively short period, we also suffer loss in terms of time invested in them and provision of technical training.

Even though funding is requested over 3 years, we shall confirm permanent posts, preconceiving that options will surface to fund the new posts from year 4 (additional new funding source or inevitable staff turnover). We shall also be securing our investment by strengthening our employment contracts, demanding the refund of any training investment if the incumbent leaves the post early.

5. What will be achieved with the additional investment and what difference will this make?

An increasing number of *Ffordd Gwynedd* exercises realises that technology is required to improve Council services. These can involve a myriad of differing solutions, either making use of existing technology or building a bespoke solution.

Often, due to the nature of *Ffordd Gwynedd* and the principle of putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do, our solutions will usually result in bespoke solutions, requiring the creation of new IT systems.

The additional investment will buck the trend of failing to respond to requests for new systems, allowing the IT Service to reverse the negative trend.

6. What proof do we have that suggests or confirms that the intended steps are the best options in response to the stated issue?

Increased frustrations are aired in customer satisfaction surveys in relation to the IT Service's software development work.

The comments aren't targeted at the quality or understanding the brief, but rather the time it takes before a request is progressed to development, with some not even seeing the light of day.

The work programme and the waiting list are also evidence of the increasing demand, reflecting what the IT Service is hearing from their customers.

More often than not, an off the shelf system does not exist for requirement borne out of *Ffordd Gwynedd* outcomes. The only way to respond positively to the findings is to provide a bespoke solution. The resources need strengthening to meet the required increase.

7. Conclusion

Funding the 3 additional posts from the Transformation Fund will strengthen the ability of the Information Technology Service to respond to service requirements as findings from *Ffordd Gwynedd* exercises.

The additional resources will enable the Information Technology Service to develop and host timely solutions in response to *Ffordd Gwynedd* exercises.

This will lead to improved services across the Council through the introduction of purposeful and fit for purpose IT systems.

8. Next steps

Confirmation to release the requested funds will allow us to approach the employment market, filling the posts within the coming months.

Views of the Local Member

Not relevant

Views of the Statutory Officers

Monitoring Officer:

The report gives a proper explanation of what is being sought, the aims and outcomes to be expected.

Statutory Finance Officer:

There will be several deserving applications emanating from the Council Plan competing for scarce resources from the Transformation Fund. It is a matter for Cabinet members to prioritise the applications that will make a difference when allocating resources from the Fund. I confirm that there is sufficient provision to finance the plans that have been presented to Cabinet, and that there is further money available from the Fund for some projects that will come to future Cabinet meetings for approval.