

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

Date:	16 July 2019
Title of Item:	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for the Environment
Purpose:	To accept and note the information in the report
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gareth Griffith
Contact Officer:	Dafydd Wyn Williams, Head of Environment Department

Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

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 the Environment. This includes reporting on where we have reached with measuring performance, and the latest in terms of savings and cuts schemes.
- 1.2 I would remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at meetings of the Management Team which also include two representatives of the relevant Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 Overall, I am happy with the performance of the measures for which I am responsible, or that relevant steps have been taken to improve performance.

2 THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

3 PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 **Appendix 1** reports on the performance measures that are associated with my portfolio.
- 3.2 The **Planning Service** is responsible for facilitating and managing developments in the interests of our communities, the economy and the environment.
- 3.3 The measure of **How quickly all planning applications have taken on average to be determined (C2)** clearly demonstrates the difference between the time taken to determine applications by Officers, compared to applications determined by the Planning Committee. In the recent period, a major difference is seen between the time taken to determine applications at the Committee, taking from 378 days in April 2019, to 79 days in May 2019. Usually, determinations are made sooner by officers rather than the Committee due to the complex or contentious nature of the applications submitted to the Committee. However, in May, the Committee was making decisions more swiftly than the officers. A number of factors were associated with this situation, including that officers were awaiting determinations

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on planning appeals in order to provide guidance on similar applications. There was also a need to wait for supplementary planning guidance to be adopted in order to expand upon the adopted policies as part of the Joint Local Development Plan. Although the performance of planning officers has recently deteriorated, it should be noted that 76% of the applications have been determined within the statutory timeframe, and it is highlighted that only a small number of applications actually lead to the deterioration in their performance.

- 3.4 It should be noted that, overall, the people of Gwynedd are generally satisfied with the service provided by the Planning Service. However, it has been regularly noted that their customers are unsatisfied with the contact arrangements for the service. This is a theme that has also emerged in the Ffordd Gwynedd review of the service, and therefore this will be addressed.
- 3.5 The task of measuring work in the planning enforcement field in a meaningful way continues. The service has now been categorising cases in order to prioritise them. By prioritising, the intention is to ensure that the most serious cases are resolved, by changing the focus to what matters to the people of Gwynedd, rather than resolve a high number of easy cases swiftly. To date in 2019-20, the service has looked into 11% of the open cases. It is important to remember, however, that the nature of the Planning Enforcement work is slow due to the legal requirements around the process.
- 3.6 Following the adoption of the Joint Local Development Plan in the summer of 2017, the Joint Planning Policy Unit has been working hard to develop and adopt supplementary planning guidance in order to expand upon the Planning policies. Two supplementary planning guidance were adopted in March 2019, and one in April. Other planning guidance are nearing completion and adoption; however, recent appeal determinations has led to reconsidering some aspects of the guidance.
- 3.7 The purpose of the **Public Protection Service** is to support businesses and protect public health and environmental standards and trading standards for the public and ensure that licensable activities are provided in a way which protects the public and supports businesses. The **Percentage of food establishments meeting the food hygiene standards (G6)** measure notes that 99.15% of food establishments conform, with only 0.85% that fail, namely 18 business out of 2124. The service works with the failing businesses to rectify the situation.
- 3.8 The measures for the **Percentage of food establishments that have received Food Hygiene (G8) and Food Standards (G9) inspections** show that the service is still unable to complete Food Hygiene and Food Standards inspections in accordance with its programme. At the end of the previous period, 8.55% of the programmed Food Hygiene inspections, and 36.24% of the programmed Food Standards inspections had not been completed. This includes a backlog of residual inspections since 2018/19.
- 3.9 Having challenged their performance, the Service noted that the beginning of the year is traditionally a period of recording and putting everything in order following the previous year. The service is expected to improve their performance in relation to the programme in the next period, and visit a number of seasonal businesses. The service has recently received additional resources in order to assist them in coping with their work load. I have asked them to report on their progress in relation to the pledges made to the Food Standards Agency at the next performance challenging meeting.

- 3.10 The information about the **Average number of days taken to determine a taxi licence application (G7)** demonstrates that their performance with regard to processing vehicle and company licences continues to be within two days on average. The performance of processing driver licences has remained stable on the whole, by reducing from 28 days to 18.22 days before returning to 25.69 days. A number of taxi driver licences have been renewed recently, as a number of drivers had come to the end of their three-year cycle. This means that a high number of applications have been processed swiftly, thus bringing the average down.
- 3.11 The **Property Service** is responsible for supporting the Council's Departments by providing suitable property in order to deliver services and ensuring that the Council's property portfolio is managed effectively and efficiently.
- 3.12 We see that the data measuring the **Time (in days) taken to complete a request for maintenance work (Eiddo1)** has gradually improved over the past 12 months, from 8.4 days to 6.9 days. The positive impact of the new IT system can be seen here, which has facilitated work processes, and one of the Council's employed craftsmen has returned to work following sickness.
- 3.13 The Service reported that the performance of the **Percentage of maintenance unit customer satisfaction (Eiddo2)** has deteriorated recently, falling from 10 out of 10 in February 2019, to 8 out of 10 in April and May. According to the service, this follows the Falconer Electricals company going into liquidation. This company was one of the Council's main contractors in Meirionnydd, and there were considerable difficulties in offering a service in the area at short notice.
- 3.14 The **Percentage of buildings with appropriate security systems in place (Eiddo4)** performance measure has deteriorated substantially recently, from 91% in June 2018 to 63% in December 2018. In its report to the Cabinet, my predecessor noted that the Service had commissioned an external company to complete the work as a staff member was sick. The situation has since improved, as 76% of the buildings now have security systems in place. The service has also appointed a new officer to undertake the work, and I trust that the performance will return to its historic good performance.
- 3.15 It must be noted that the service would not let any Council buildings be unsafe for staff or the public. Any necessary inspections have been completed, and any risks have been managed with temporary measures being introduced if the matter cannot be permanently resolved immediately. The wording of this measure could be misleading, as it suggests that we have unsafe buildings in use. As this is incorrect, we will attempt to improve the wording in future to reflect the actual situation.
- 3.16 The **Integrated Transport Unit** measure in its entirety facilitates people's ability to travel from one place to another across a network which is safe whilst also raising their awareness of and educating them about safety.
- 3.17 The measures **Number of complaints received about public transport services contracted to the Council (Cludiant02)** and the **Number of complaints received about commercial public transport services (Cludiant03)** are important measures for the Service. The service has now changed to measuring the number of incidents that caused complaints, rather than the number of complaints received. This has derived from realising that all incidents have led to a number of complaints, and

therefore it is more meaningful to record incidents. Six incidents (two for Cludiant02, and four for Cludiant03) were recorded recently. It was noted that the Arriva company had been having problems with staff sickness and vehicles breaking down on the 3B service, as well as recently withdrawing from providing services. Since another company started providing the services, the number of complaints has fallen.

- 3.18 The **Traffic, Projects and Street Works Unit** is responsible for processing traffic orders. The time it takes to process traffic orders has now reduced to 174 days. The service has also done a lot of work to better understand the process, and the legal processes in particular. I am confident that this more in-depth understanding of all components of the process will lead to a further performance improvement.
- 3.19 The work of **The Council's Carbon Management Plan** has led to a reduction in the Council's carbon emissions by 9.9% in the year between April 2018 and April 2019. The weather caused the emissions to increase slightly in the same period in 2018, but we can see the impact of the scheme on reducing emissions here, without severe weather affecting it.
- 3.20 The task of identifying measures that reflect the work of the **Countryside Service** continues. It is likely that the measures will derive from the Service's Ffordd Gwynedd work, and I will report on it in future.
- 3.21 Three Ffordd Gwynedd reviews are in hand at present. In the Planning field (run in parallel with the Building Control review), a great deal of analysis work has been carried out, and their findings have revealed fields for improvement. The Countryside Unit has commenced a review, and is busy collecting data and analysing their processes. The Estates and Facilities Unit is yet to begin, and have noted that they will be ready to begin the review in six months.

4 **FINANCIAL POSITION / SAVINGS**

4.1 **Realising the Current Savings Schemes**

- 4.2 All the savings plans of the Environment Department until the end of the 2018/19 year have been realised.
- 4.3 13 of the department's 2019/20 savings schemes have been completed, or are on track to being completed in time. One scheme, namely the Staff Travel savings, is awaiting the Cabinet's approval.
- 4.4 It was noted that there were risks involved with some of the Department's schemes: In relation to the scheme: *Increase income by increasing the number of pay and display car parks, and increase parking fees whilst also considering whether to keep the cost of parking for residents at the same rate, or even lower*, more development work needs to be done, including the Communities Scrutiny Committee in order to come up with innovative ideas. In relation to the scheme: *Provide electric car charge points in car parks*, again, there is a need to conduct more research in order to ensure that we provide the best service. In relation to the scheme: *Reduce the resource within the Planning Policy Service*, there is a need to act cautiously in order to achieve the saving by continuing to offer the service.

Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety

ii. Head of Finance Department:

The report notes the situation of the Environment Department in terms of realising the savings schemes, with 13 of the 2019/20 savings schemes having already been realised or on track to being realised on time, and the risk involved with the three other savings schemes have been noted in part 4 of the report. Finance Officers will assist the responsible Cabinet Member in monitoring the progress against these schemes, and we will be in a position to further report on the progress following the next financial review.

Appendices**Appendix 1 - Performance Measures**