

CABINET CYNGOR GWYNEDD

Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date:	23 July 2019
Title of Item:	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support and Legal
Purpose:	To accept and note the information in the report.
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nia Jeffreys
Contact Officer:	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 the Corporate Support and Legal Department. This includes outlining progress against the pledges within the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023, where we have reached in relation to the performance measures, and the latest in terms of savings and cuts.
- 1.2 I would like to remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at the management team meetings of the Corporate Support Department and the Legal Service, which also included a representation from the Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 The main matters I wish to highlight are
 - **Apprenticeships Scheme**, where several new apprentices have already been appointed
 - **Implementing Ffordd Gwynedd**, where the new Strategy has been created and work is already underway to look at the wording that notes the expectations for each of the five functions which, in turn, will be shared with every employee in the Council.
 - **Keeping the Benefit Local**, where our expenditure with companies local to Gwynedd remains quite consistent with last year, but the percentage of expenditure has fallen
 - **Online Self Service**, where, for the first time, 5 of our services receive more application online than via the phone
 - **DBS declarations**, where the online application system is not available through the medium of Welsh

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- **The Registry Service**, for receiving a very positive response from the Compliance Officer to their annual report, and I congratulate the Service on its performance and achievements.

1.4 I am generally happy with the progress of the lead projects within the Strategic Plan and the performance measures for which I am responsible.

2 THE DECISION SOUGHT

2.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

3 COUNCIL PLAN PROJECTS

3.1 Keeping the Benefit Local

The Unit continues to advise and encourage local businesses to apply for contracts with the Council; however, in some fields, e.g. major capital contracts, the skills or expertise are not always available within Gwynedd. Since April, necessary substantial expenditure was made on refuse collection lorries and building Ysgol y Garnedd with companies whose headquarters are in Wrexham. This has meant that 49% of the capital and revenue expenditure was local expenditure between 1 April and 30 June, but although this is a reduction in comparison to the 55% of expenditure in the same period last year, the expenditure itself is quite consistent - £16,750,218 this year compared to £16,844,683 April to June 2018/19.

The percentage of revenue only expenditure has also fallen - 51% between April and June this year compared to 55% over the same period last year. Although the percentage has fallen, the expenditure itself is higher - £14,809,284 this year compared to £13,952,278 last year. This drop in percentage is in relation to the A55 maintenance work.

It is therefore of concern to me that it is likely that the percentage of our local expenditure will be lower this year because of these major projects.

I have emphasised that as much as possible should be done to encourage these major companies to sub-contract work to local companies.

3.2 Apprenticeships Scheme

We have planned to appoint 20 apprentices in 2019/20, and six of these have already been appointed, with the first starting work with the Council on 1 July, and placements have been set up for a further 11. It is great news that three of the six are women, and two of these women have been appointed to engineering roles in the Consultancy Department.

This project also brings a wider benefit to develop the use of the Welsh language. We have drawn up guidelines for colleges and any other establishment that explain the language requirements that we have as a Council, and we assist those who apply for apprenticeship roles.

3.3 **Women in Leadership**

A Project Group has been established in order to move this work forward. Preparatory work has been done to review the questionnaires sent to women in the Council two years ago, and to arrange a workshop for the 55 female Managers/Assistant Heads/Heads of Departments/Directors in the Council. A workshop is also being planned for men within the Council who are often responsible for recruitment.

3.4 **The Welsh Language in Public Services**

Unfortunately, I do not believe that the work on this project is progressing as quickly as it should. This may be because we are focusing on the organisations rather than what we are attempting to achieve, namely changing the habits of citizens to use the Welsh language. It is considered that one way of doing this is for other public organisations in Gwynedd to encourage individuals who are able to speak Welsh to use it when accessing services. I intend to ask officers to attempt to change the emphasis of the project, which is delivered through the Public Services Board.

3.5 **Gwynedd Businesses to use the Welsh Language**

The direct contact with the county's businesses is undertaken by officers within the Economy and Community Department, and they promote the use of the Welsh language amongst the private sector. Hunaniaith officers, through their community work, also encourage businesses to increase their use. Another element of the recent work is collaborating with the other counties of west Wales, through the Arfor project, in order to create a digital platform to reconcile and co-ordinate all resources and support available to businesses to support them to use more of the Welsh language.

3.6 **Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's services**

There are two elements to this work, namely assessing and updating the language requirements of various jobs in the Council, and offering practical support for staff to learn or improve their Welsh in order to reach the required levels of fluency.

The first element is completed, and the second element is progressing very satisfactorily. There are many effective learning methods at work - 'Welsh language tip of the month' and on-line language improvement training, face-to-face training, or the Cyfeillion Cymraeg (Welsh Friends) scheme. This scheme has assisted a Byw'n Iach staff member to boost her confidence so that she now speaks Welsh with her clients who, in turn, have acknowledged her effort to switch languages in the workplace.

3.7 **Empowering Units to Implement Ffordd Gwynedd**

As an amended version of the Ffordd Gwynedd Strategy has also been submitted for the Cabinet's attention at this meeting, you will see that it includes our proposal for developing this important work for the future.

Since the beginning of April, we now keep a central register of all requests from various managers for support to undertake Ffordd Gwynedd reviews. We will attempt to measure the level of support they require, and will therefore revisit the role of the Ffordd Gwynedd Consultants, and possibly move away from holding intensive reviews only. More practical sessions of sharing experiences of implementing Ffordd Gwynedd are being held between various service teams, and I am certain that this, along with sharing information through the Managers Network, will be useful when expanding the work in future.

Since the six-day training programme for managers commenced in summer 2017, every service manager has now attended. Officers now continue to hold the course for new managers and prospective future managers.

Work is already underway to look at the wording that notes the expectations for each of the five functions which, in turn, will be shared with every employee in the Council.

3.8 **Developing Leadership**

Since April, work has continued to hold meetings of the Managers Network, where training on developing 'leadership' skills rather than 'management' skills and sharing experiences have assisted us to expand the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd.

Schemes are also already in the pipeline to offer further training on leadership skills for Cabinet members in the autumn.

4 **PERFORMANCE**

- 4.1 In addition to the work described above on projects relating to the Council Plan, the remaining projects of the Corporate Support Department and Legal Service are described below. Furthermore, a full report on the performance measures associated with my portfolio can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 The **Self-service** development on the Council website is essential to enable the residents of Gwynedd to gain access to information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and offer a more cost effective method of contacting the Council for a service.
- 4.3 The number of self-service accounts continues to increase, with the creation of 42,716 accounts by the end of May 2019, which is 10,305 more accounts than the same period last year. The fact that the numbers who log in to their accounts every month are also rising compared to previous years is just as important, namely approximately 10,000 a month.

- 4.4 A significant development since April, and indeed for the first time since the beginning of the self-service development, is that five services now receive more requests submitted through the self-service than over the phone. These services comprise of: ordering a garden waste collection, ordering waste or recycling apparatus, problems with traffic lights, problems with public toilets and problems with road markings/signs. Since the beginning of March this year, it has also been possible to apply and pay for a Gwynedd Parking Ticket via the self-service, and it is very encouraging that 44.2% of all applications are already on-line.
- 4.5 Due to reasons beyond our control, there was a delay in introducing the ability to check the balance and pay Council tax through self-service. This project did not become live by the end of April 2019, in accordance with the original plan, due to problems with elements of the system that is provided by an external company. Nevertheless, I am confident that the problems are being resolved and that the provision will be available during the current year.
- 4.6 The priority for the near future is for the 16+ Travel Ticket service to become active by the beginning of August. This will enable our young people to order and pay for a travel ticket, replace missing tickets, change details on a ticket and submit an enquiry or complaint. There is another exciting development, namely that it will also be possible to accept a 'travel e-ticket' through the 'apGwynedd'.
- 4.7 The Council's Communication and Engagement Service is responsible for the **Council's website**. Between April and May 2019, 334,992 individuals used the Council's website. Of the 290 individuals who used the feedback device to express their views on the content, only 62 noted a score of less than 5 out of 5, which is 0.85% of the total visitors. A total of 35 complaints were received about the website's content, but it was possible to close 86% of these within three days, which is an improvement compared to 75% over the previous three months.
- 4.8 Another part of the **Communication and Engagement Service's** work is sharing information about the Council's work in the press, and responding to requests by the press for information and comments. We announced 29 press statements in April and May, with 145 positive news items or articles deriving from them. 96 enquiries were received from the press in the same period, with only two 'negative' reports about the Council's work deriving from them. 12 requests for information were received from the British and international press with regards to the effect of climate change on the community of Fairbourne, and it was possible to provide a positive response to this unexpected coverage.
- 4.9 The purpose of the new **Research and Information Service** is to 'Help all members of staff to manage information on paper or electronically, and adhere to information acts. Develop the ability of the Council and its partners to use information and evidence in order to make the best decisions for the people of Gwynedd.'

- 4.10 There were four 'information breaches' (where information about an individual has been stolen/lost/sent to the wrong address) in April and May. This number is a cause for concern, and therefore work is underway to look at our policies for the workforce, and consider how we as an organisation will respond to these cases in future. The Chief Executive considers that, in terms of Ffordd Gwynedd's 'implementation framework', cases such as these are outside the framework, and this needs to be reflected in our response. Nevertheless, none of these incidents were serious enough to have to report to the Information Commissioner's Office.
- 4.11 Considerable work has been done over the past years to transfer the Council's electronic files to a new system called 'iGwynedd'. All of the migration work to the new system will be complete by the end of July, and we will then focus on providing support and training to any staff member who needs it.
- 4.12 Many research projects are underway, such as the population projections based on 10 local areas within Gwynedd, an update to the information base about accommodation to provide visitors with better information for Gwynedd, and the economic impact of this. Other exciting news is that the Unit has won the tender to undertake an analysis for the North Wales Local Services Board of the evidence available on equality and human rights in North Wales, at a local authority level where possible. The results of this research will ultimately be available to us as a Council.
- 4.13 One of the responsibilities of the Council's **Support Service** is to administrate the process of ensuring that any of the Council's employees or members in need of a DBS has received one, and that it is correct and up-to-date. I am confident that there are no employees who work without the correct DBS, but it is a shame that we must use paper processes that are burdensome in terms of time and resources, with both being so scarce. As the DBS on-line system is not available in Welsh or bilingually, we are not willing to use it. We are in contact with the Welsh Language Commissioner to attempt to move the work forward in terms of developing a Welsh language model for the DBS on-line applications.
- 4.14 The **Galw Gwynedd and Siopau Gwynedd** Services provide prompt and accurate assistance for customers to access Council services by providing answers, guidance and service. The time taken to answer phone calls in **Galw Gwynedd** during April and May was 42 seconds, which is slightly higher than the time of 40 seconds between January and March. The work I have just described within the Self-service project has freed up time at Galw Gwynedd and Siopau Gwynedd ensure a swifter response to telephone and face-to-face enquiries. Consequently, work is ongoing to develop a web-chat provision, and I will present information about this provision in my next report.
- 4.15 In enquiring into customer satisfaction with the service provided by **Siopau Gwynedd**, 9% of the total gave a score of less than 10. This figure was much higher for those who scored less than 10 for the service provided through Galw Gwynedd, namely 65.22%. The dissatisfaction with this service is

increasing because, mainly, customers do not receive an update about their enquiry. I will be addressing this matter over the next period.

- 4.16 I wish to congratulate our **Registration Service** for receiving a very positive response from the Compliance Officer to their annual report, and I congratulate the Service on its performance and achievements. It managed to maintain the target of 98% for birth registrations in April, but the percentage of deaths that were registered within five days fell from 90% to 87%, mainly due to the Easter weekend (the five days includes weekends and bank holidays). Therefore, I have no cause to be concerned about the performance of the Service.
- 4.17 Since my last report, the **Health, Safety and Well-being Service** has been working with the Chief Executive to assess health and safety controls within each of the Council's services, and to put a work plan in place to respond to any gaps. One of these matters is assessing how confident we can be in the individual managers. I have requested that the service develops a measure that will enable us to measure this confidence over time.
- 4.18 This year, the service is addressing the development of suitable support for the welfare and mental health of staff. A very effective workshop was held for managers in order to educate them on how to identify signs of mental health problems in themselves and their staff. I am pleased to state that steps are already in place to consult with staff on proposing options to improve their support in the workplace, e.g. 'quiet' areas. I am confident that we have full support by us as members and by senior officers within the Council to change culture in the workplace, so that we create an environment where any employee feels confident enough to share concerns.
- 4.19 The former separate **Democracy and Language** services have merged since 1 April 2019, and I consider these current structural changes to be necessary. I have shared my concerns with the Service Manager that the current performance measures don't reflect the true performance of the service, and have asked the Manager, as part of the re-structuring process, to reconsider and review the current performance measures.
- 4.20 Having challenged the performance of the **Legal Service** they continue to report that there is a high level of satisfaction with the service, and every questionnaire returned gives the service a score of 10. The Elections Unit is attempting to establish ways of increasing the numbers who register to vote, and has recently undertaken a pilot whilst canvassing. I will report on the outcome of the experiment in my next report.
- 4.21 A plan is also in the pipeline to ascertain how engagement can be achieved with school pupils with regards to the electoral process to ensure that they use their vote. It is intended to develop a pack in order to visit schools to do this.

- 4.22 Of course, only the main performance matters are noted above. Whilst I have held detailed discussions on various other matters within the various units, I am satisfied that the performance of those other units are within the range of expected performance. These units are the Council's Business Support, Democracy and Language, Human Resources and Implementing Ffordd Gwynedd.

5 FINANCIAL POSITION / SAVINGS

- 5.1 All the savings schemes for 2019/20 have already been realised, with the exception of one scheme, namely *Merging the Learning and Development Unit and the Workforce Development Unit* valued at £30,000, and this is also on track to be completed on time.
- 5.2 Within the Legal Unit, the historical saving in the coroner's budget is still causing difficulties for us, mainly as the service is not stable enough to be able to achieve, but it is hoped that this can be achieved in the coming months.

6 NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 6.1 None to note.

7 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

7.1 Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. Monitoring Officer:

No observations regarding propriety.

ii. Head of Finance Department:

The report portrays a fair picture of the Corporate Support Department and the Legal Service's position regarding delivering on the savings plans, with all the 2019/20 savings plans already being delivered, or on track to be delivered on time. The risk attached to the remaining savings plan from 2018/19 for Legal Services has been noted in section 5.2 of the report. Finance officers will assist the responsible Cabinet Member to monitor the plans, and we will be in a position to report further on progress following the next financial review.

7.2 Views of the Local Member:

- 7.2.1 Not a local matter.

7.3 Results of Any Consultation:

- 7.3.1 None to note.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Performance Measures