

THE CABINET 23/07/19

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Gareth Thomas, Catrin Elen Wager and Cemlyn Rees Williams

Also present: Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director) and Annes Sion (Member Support Officer)

Item 5: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department), Meinir Griffith (Service Improvement Officer), Carey Cartwright (Learning and Organisational Development Manager), Mannon Trappe (Senior Safeguarding Manager, Quality Assurance and Mental Health), Aled Gibbard (Senior Operational Manager - Care Resources, Children and Supporting Families), and Sion Huws (Senior Solicitor)

Items 6 and 7: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department) and Arwel Evans (Procurement Manager)

Item 9: Meilys Smith (Senior Transformation Manager - Adults, Health and Well-being)

Item 10: Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department) and Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department)

1. APOLOGIES

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Ioan Thomas and Cllr Dilwyn Morgan.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent items.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Presented by Cllr Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

To accept the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented noting that it summarised data for the period of time between 2017 and 2019. It was added that it was important to respond to complaints in order to improve services. It was expressed that the report noted the steps of the complaint procedure, and that it highlighted room for improvement.

The Head of Corporate Support added that a significant amount of information relating to complaints over the past two years was to be seen in the report. It was reiterated that learning from mistakes and service improvement were an integral part of Ffordd Gwynedd. It was noted that the report came in three parts, namely Corporate Complaints, Children Service Complaints, and Adults Service Complaints.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the report was factual, noting the need for the Council to learn from the complaints and to deal with them in a positive manner. It was expressed that the one thing highlighted as a common complaint was the need to provide information in a timely manner, and that therefore, as a result of this, there was a need for the Council to look at improving its engagement with residents.
- It was expressed that a comment about the Ombudsman's role had been noted at the previous Full Council. It was added that there were two components to the Ombudsman's work, the first involving complaints regarding services provided by public bodies (it was noted that this work was undertaken regularly), and the second being the Councillors' Code of Conduct. It was reiterated that the complaints element regarding services provided by Councils and other bodies such as Health was prioritised by the Ombudsman, and as a result, there was a higher public interest threshold to the Councillors' Code of Conduct element. It was emphasised that Councillors signed the Code of Conduct, and that they were responsible for adhering to the principles therein, anyhow. Attention was drawn to concerns around cases of women being bullied on Community Councils, and it was noted that guidance on the public interest test highlighted bullying as a factor in favour of investigation. The Ombudsman was aware of this and the matter was being discussed at a national level.
- It was noted that there was a need to look at complaints as a journey - by making changes to the Council's culture, it would be possible to improve the service provided. In terms of the number of cases presented to the Ombudsman, it was noted that only 2 of the 32 had needed a report. It was added that this showed that the complaints procedure worked well

6. FFORDD GWYNEDD PLAN 2019-22

Presented by Cllr Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

The Scheme and work programme for 2019-22 were approved.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that the Cabinet was fully committed to Ffordd Gwynedd. It was noted that the Cabinet had adopted the original Ffordd Gwynedd Scheme back in October 2015, and it was explained that Ffordd Gwynedd was a way of working adopted by the Council. It was reiterated that this was rooted in a change in culture, behaviours and mind-sets; and it was added that this decision would give further direction in terms of the Scheme and the way forward.

The Head of the Corporate Support Department added that Ffordd Gwynedd training had been held and that enthusiasm for service improvement was clear to be seen. It was expressed that there was work to be done on departments' plans in terms of how to cascade the mind-set to everyone, and that a work programme was outlined in the report.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the re-establishment of the managers' network was integral to ensuring discussion around Ffordd Gwynedd. When looking at the Ffordd Gwynedd journey, it was noted that, while the Council had taken major steps forward, the development varied between departments. However, constant reflection was seen. It was added that there was much work yet to be done, but that the Strategy would move the Council nearer to the end goal.
- It was emphasised that leadership development was central to Ffordd Gwynedd, and that there was a need to establish a culture in which managers led their staff rather than managed people.
- It was noted that Ffordd Gwynedd's sub-heading was to ensure that the people of Gwynedd were at the centre of everything the Council did. It was added that it was impossible to do everything that everyone wanted the Council to do, and as a result, there was a need to prioritise.
- It was noted that it was possible to see the Ffordd Gwynedd journey within departments, and it was added that performance sometimes saw a decline before improving.

7. SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT POLICY AND THE CAMPAIGN TO BAN THE USE OF SINGLE USE PLASTIC

The report was submitted by Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

1. It was approved to incorporate the provisions of the Well-being of Future

Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in the Council's Sustainable Procurement Policy.

2. The campaign to seek to ban the purchase and use of single-use plastic was approved and the changes in the Sustainable Procurement Policy to address this campaign were adopted.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that by being proactive, the service could respond to the current challenge of reducing the use of single-use plastic. It was added that by being proactive, the problem could be tackled.

The Head of the Corporate Support Department added that the service asked the Cabinet to agree to two things; firstly to approve the incorporation of the Well-being of Future Generations act in the Sustainable Procurement Policy, and secondly to approve the campaign to prevent the purchase and use of single-use plastic and to adopt the changes in policy to address this campaign.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The department was thanked for submitting the item following the notice of motion at the Full Council in March 2018. It was added that it was important for the work to be undertaken jointly with the cross-departmental task group.
- The report was welcomed, and it was noted that plastics had a major impact upon the planet.
- It was noted that the Council had declared a climate emergency, and that the departments were attempting to find ways of getting rid of single-use plastics cross-departmentally across the Council, as was the responsibility of each department.

8. CARE INSPECTORATE WALES ANNUAL LETTER

Presented by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

Resolved to accept the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that it was a requirement for the Council to publish the letter in accordance with the Care Inspectorate Wales code of practice. It was expressed that the content of the letter provided feedback on inspection and performance evaluation activity completed by Care Inspectorate Wales during the year, in addition to reporting on the Council's progress and providing an outline of the forward work programme. It was added that the content of the letter partly praised the Council and that it was to be welcomed.

It was expressed that the letter noted where the Council had achieved success, and it was acknowledged that the Adults Department was undergoing transformation. It was added that the Council's workforce was stable and that strong leadership and governance were to be seen.

The Corporate Director for care noted that the period prior to receipt of the letter had been a concerning one; however, pride was expressed following reading its content. She added that the heads of service, staff and carers were to be thanked for their work in ensuring this. It was noted that the confident and stable workforce employed by Gwynedd was indicative of a situation which was not to be seen in a number of other counties.

It was emphasised that the inspectorate saw that there was a journey of transformation, but that it embodied the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd in accordance with legislation. Attention was drawn to challenges, which included keeping an eye on the safeguarding field along with the consistent increase in challenges facing the children field.

Gratitude was expressed for the support of all members towards the Council's care work.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Staff were thanked for their good work.

9. NEW DOMICILIARY CARE MODEL FOR GWYNEDD

Presented by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

- It was agreed to establish a new model for providing and commissioning domiciliary care based on areas, and to jointly commission with the Health Board.
- It was approved to implement on the grounds of the favoured option, namely to maintain a mixed market by tendering in a way that was likely to lead to achieving the aims of the department.
- To ask the Adults Department to review the financial model in order to ensure that it did not hinder their ability to achieve their savings, and to report back were there any risk of that.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and the decision was noted, emphasising that the reason the new model was needed was to move away from the practice of funding per package or individual, and to create a flexible provision across areas. It was added that the favoured option was to maintain the internal:external market split. It was noted that financial and legal risks had emerged during the negotiation phase, but that arrangements were in place.

It was expressed that a number of pilots had been undertaken at various geographical locations across the county. It was expressed that these had demonstrated strong examples of flexible care and that the service users were happy with the care received. It was added that the new model for providing and commissioning domiciliary care would be jointly commissioned with the Health Board.

To provide context, the Senior Operational Manager added that there was a shortage of domiciliary care available. It was expressed that in order to further understand what was needed, the situation as a whole needed to be looked at. It was noted that discussions had been held with service users and emphasis was placed on the importance of a pilot in order to turn the idea into reality.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that discussions had been held with the unions. The unions were reasonably supportive but there was a need to ensure as little an impact as possible on staff. It was expressed that residents and service users were central to the new model, with staff a very close second. It was expressed that there was no intention for people to transfer to other providers should they not wish to do so, and arrangements would be in place to protect staff. It was added that discussions were being held with the unions to ensure that the transfer process had as little impact as possible on staff and to ensure that employment was maintained.
- The new model was welcomed, but it was emphasised that recruitment was a historical problem, and enquiries were made as to whether the new model would change this. It was expressed that the new model would encourage and give staff the opportunity to be more creative, and that a higher proportion of the funding available would go to staff.
- As funding the scheme meant using savings deriving from changes to work arrangements and as the Adults Department was also dependent on this to achieve its savings programme, concern was raised with regard to the financial model following the Cabinet's discussions the previous week around the Department's performance. It was emphasised that there was a need to ensure that the new model did not hinder the Adults Department's ability to achieve its savings, and it was asked that the situation be thoroughly assessed, and reported back upon should there be any risk of that.

10. HOLIDAY HOMES AND PLANNING

Presented by Cllr Gareth Griffith

DECISION

Resolved to:

- I. Agree that the Environment Department, on behalf of the Council, was to procure and commission research work on holiday homes for Gwynedd but with a national context, with the support of the Royal Town Planning

Institute (Wales) and other relevant organisations, to include consideration of the matters referred to in part 3 of the report.

- II. Agree to provide up to £80,000 from the Council's Transformation Fund, to be released in consultation with the Head of Finance for the work.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented noting that the department was making an application for £80,000 from the transformation fund in order to commission research into holiday homes in Gwynedd. It was expressed that a number of concerns had been raised concerning the number of holiday homes in the Gwynedd area, and the main concerns were noted as

- The local supply of houses available to meet the need
- The impact on the local community, the Welsh language and the services in the community
- The potential impact on house prices
- The impact on the amenities of local residents
- Safety standards for the properties.

It was expressed that the report made it clear that the Council did not have much control of the matter. It was added that there were many varying properties and an extremely high number of self-catering properties.

The Assistant Head of the Environment Department added that examples of regulating holiday homes were to be seen across the world, but it was hoped that it would be possible to look at this in greater detail in the new research. It was emphasised that material evidence would be needed in order to change legislation, and that the research work could also contribute to this, but that a Wales-wide picture would be needed. It was stated that the research work would be significant and would offer options for improved management. However, it was added that to ensure this, robust evidence would be needed.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the number of holiday homes was a concern which had been raised over the years. It was expressed that statistics had increased over the years, and added that a number of local people took advantage of opportunities. It was added that the investigation commissioned was an attempt to establish the facts.
- Support was shown towards the research, and the need was expressed for evidence and understanding of the legislations used worldwide. It was acknowledged that the field was a complex one in which there would be no clear solution.
- It was added that there had been a recent increase in AirBnB properties, and so it was expressed that obtaining robust data on these properties would be useful. It was added that AirBnB was a global company, and the need to be aware of residents' needs within communities was expressed.
- Enquiries were made regarding the time-scale, and it was noted that it would be possible to draw up a brief within the next two months. As a result, the timescale would be clearer following this.

11. COPING WITH THE FINANCIAL SITUATION IN 2020-21

Submitted by Dilwyn Williams

DECISION

Subject to the condition noted in Clause 15 of the report, in order to be in a position to cope with the financial situation in 2020/21, the Cabinet would adopt Option 3, and request for each department to find their share of the £2m needed to address the minimum resource deficit the Council was likely to face due to inflation, and to ask the Scrutiny Committees to scrutinise these proposals in the autumn.

Whilst reporting, departments should also report on how they intended to cope with any deficits that needed to be addressed in their savings plans.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted, should the worst implications noted in the report come true, that the Council would be faced with a difficult situation. It was expressed that the first appendix noted the historical picture, and it was noted that the grant and the tax increase had not been sufficient to pay for the inflation. It was added that the Council had saved £65million over the past 12 years, and that much of this had been achieved through efficiency savings. It was expressed that identifying efficiency savings was becoming increasingly difficult for the departments.

It was noted that in order to plan for the year ahead, a fan chart was to be seen in Appendix 2. It was expressed that it was simple to go for the centre line in terms of savings, but it was added that there was a 50% chance that the figure would be higher. It was added that, should the £2.2m of savings planned since the previous year along with the increase of 3.5% in Council Tax be taken into consideration, the financial shortfall could be between £1.7m and £7.3m. It was expressed that over the previous years the Council had planned for the worst, but it was added that the savings arrangements for the previous year had highlighted that cuts were already a necessity, which would be difficult for a number of services. Any further cuts would be highly challenging and likely to cause alarm to people, be they residents or staff.

Three options for moving forward were highlighted, and it was expressed that the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Chief Executive recommended the third of these options. This option planned to address the shortfall of £1.7m - to be rounded up to £2m - in the optimistic scenario by sharing this sum between all departments (and schools), noting that it was an inflation contribution, and by using balances and/or a higher Council Tax increase to meet the shortfall above the optimistic scenario so as to give time to find a permanent solution.

Observations arising from the discussion

— It was expressed that the situation was frightening and alarming, and it

was emphasised that year after year, Members had to go through the savings arrangements again. They were unprepared to do so again as it was so disheartening.

- It was emphasised that there were obvious differences between the priorities of Welsh Government and the Government in Westminster.
- It was noted that a publication had stated that a higher pay rise would be awarded to Teachers, which was higher than the predictions of a 2% rise. It was added that the period of protection for Education, Children and Adults had now passed, and that it would now be difficult to find savings without affecting those services.
- Council officers were thanked for their work in foreseeing the likely situation, despite the difficulty of the task. It was expressed that the Governments' priorities focussed on Brexit and wars, emphasising that these were not the priorities of the residents of Gwynedd. It was added that the report set out the rationale for forward planning due to the lack of basic information available.

12. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SUPPORT AND LEGAL

Presented by Cllr Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

To note and accept the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting the main matters arising from the department's performance over the previous months. It was noted that a number of new apprentices had been appointed to the apprenticeships scheme, and it was added that three of the six posts were filled by women; two of these in the engineering field. In terms of the Keeping the Benefit Local scheme, it was expressed that expenditure figures with local companies remained fairly consistent with the previous year, but that expenditure figures had fallen and that the department would therefore be keeping an eye on the matter.

It was noted that the on-line self-service facility was a priority in order to offer the best service to the people of Gwynedd, and it was noted that five services received more applications via self-service than over the phone. It was added that work was being undertaken to look at how it would be possible to use an on-line chat tool. It was expressed that it was not possible to use the DBS disclosures system through the medium of Welsh, and that the Council had notified the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The Head of the Corporate Support Department added that since writing the report, the number of apprenticeships had now risen to ten posts, and that six were to be advertised over the summer for the Adults Department and the Youth Service. It was added that the Apprenticeships Scheme had funding for up to 20

apprenticeship posts, and that the target had, therefore, almost been achieved. It was emphasised that the apprenticeships were run through the medium of Welsh, and that this applied to work locations in addition to training.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that the department would investigate whether the figure of 334,992 in the website statistics referred to the number of 'hits' or the number of individual visits to the Council's website.

13. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Presented by Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

DECISION

To note and accept the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that it would summarise the main matters arising from the department's performance meetings. It was added that, on the whole, the Cabinet Member was satisfied with the way in which the department was moving forward. It was expressed that there were some gaps in the data, but that the department was moving towards a situation of having the data at its fingertips.

In terms of the Supporting People's Well-being scheme, it was noted that work was being undertaken in order to map the current arrangements. It was expressed that ACE agenda training had been jointly arranged with the Police force during October. In terms of the Supporting People Strategy, it was noted that the scheme supported parents and developed good parenting skills. It was added that the Gwynedd Family Hub would be launched during the coming months, in order to provide information on-line. It was also added that work was being undertaken to plan and gather information in preparation for the launch.

Attention was drawn to performance statistics and it was noted that a slip had been seen in the percentage of initial child protection conferences. It was expressed that this was due to the fact that the team was so small, that the absence of a single member of staff made it very difficult to improve performance. It was emphasised that there had been an increase of 11% in the number of children in care at the end of March 2019. It was emphasised that this was a significant challenge which was to be seen on a national level, and that discussions were being held with Government concerning the matter. It was added that the increase in numbers was not the only challenge, but that the children's needs were far more complex and as a result, foster placements were far more expensive.

It was noted that the Children Department's main concern was the problem it faced in reaching its savings target. With an increase in placement costs to ensure specialist care, this increased the problem. It was added that the Department was attempting to establish alternative plans so as to reach the target.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that an increase was to be seen in the number of looked after children across Wales, and the process of placing a child in care was also noted. It was stressed that 95% of cases had gone through court, and that this highlighted that robust processes were in place, with the court deciding on individual cases. It was expressed that there was a need to work with families to avoid legal proceedings.

14. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

Presented by Cllr Cemlyn Williams

DECISION

To note and accept the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and it was noted that it would refer to the three priorities seen in the Council's plan. In terms of the Strengthening Leadership project, it was expressed that the Council had agreed on the system for relevant training arrangements with GwE. It was added that the first scheme as part of this project would be to address the challenges around attracting and recruiting leaders and middle managers at Meirionnydd Secondary Schools.

Attention was given to the Twenty First Century Schools Programme, and it was noted that work had begun on building a new school for Ysgol y Garnedd, Bangor. It was noted that Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn would open its doors on 2 September 2019. It was added that problems had arisen in relation to the new school's budget following a debt incurred at one of the schools, but that this had now been resolved and that everyone was looking to the opening of the school. It was expressed that initial work had commenced to look at constructing a new school in Cricieth, by beginning initial discussions with the Governing Bodies of Ysgol Trefarthyr and Ysgol Llanystumdwy.

Attention was drawn to Transforming the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Provision, and it was noted that this scheme's main focus was around adapting the service to cope with changes to Additional Learning Resources legislation. The Cabinet Member added that he was eager to see Early Years intervention and the 16-25 provision being discussed by the Supporting People Board at a future date.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Enquiries were made as to what was to happen to the TRAC scheme, a successful scheme maintained by European Funding. It was noted that the future was uncertain, but that there were strengths to this type of scheme.

15. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

Presented by Cllr Craig ab Iago

DECISION

To note and accept the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that steps were being taken to move towards an exciting new system with the arrival of the new Housing Department, Head and Strategy. It was expressed that the report reflected upon the experience and efficiency of staff. It was added that, despite this, the new department faced challenges.

It was noted that the staff were pro-active and saw the new department as an opportunity to accomplish more. Staff were thanked for their good work.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 3.35 pm

CHAIRMAN