

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	17 September, 2019
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nia Jeffreys
Contact Officer:	Geraint Owen
Contact Telephone Number	32335
Title of Item:	Annual Employment Report

1 THE DECISION SOUGHT

Approval of the annual report for 2018/19.

2 THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

To reflect and agree on the corporate strategy in this crucial field for the future.

3 INTRODUCTION

The intention of this report is to present an annual update of the workforce details and their employment together with outlining objectives for developing our workers and setting the direction for the future.

You are reminded that the Local Consultative Joint Committee (the joint forum between the recognised union representatives and Elected Members) receives an annual report on activity in the human resources field but that report focuses on the operational relationship between the employer and the workforce representatives.

1. The Council's Workforce

The numbers employed on a full-time and part-time basis within the Council for the last three years are noted here. Note that these numbers include staff who work in our schools but not those staff employed on a casual basis during holiday/sickness periods of the permanent workforce.

	31/3/17	31/3/18	31/3/19
Full-time	2,847	2,953	3,011
Part-time	2,981	2,938	2,871
Total	5,828	5,891	5,882

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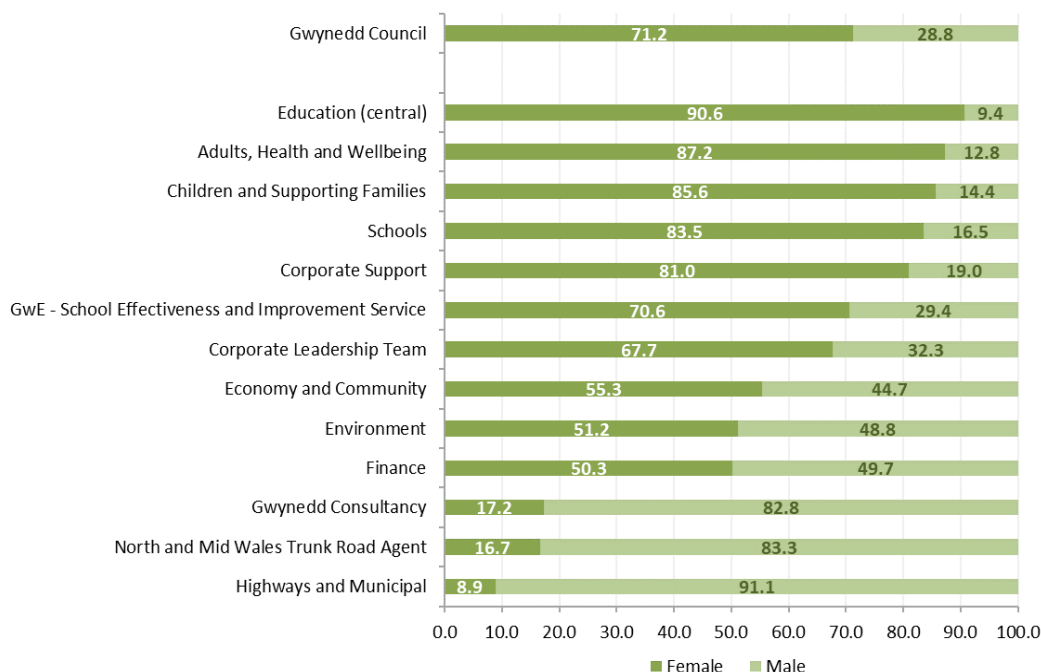
The details show a reduction of 9 in the number of individuals employed by the Council at the end of March this year compared with the same time in 2018. This relatively low reduction is significant, considering the financial challenge that is currently facing the Council and the pressure this places on the staffing budget. Note that the number of full-time employed staff has increased and the number employed on a part-time basis has reduced. The increasing number of staff employed on higher hours than in the past is most prominent in the care sector.

2. Workforce Split by Gender

A further analysis is seen here of the number of men and women employed on a full-time and part-time basis during the same period. The split over the three years has been relatively stable in the context of the number of women and men employed, and yet notice the increase in the number of women who work full-time hours and the equivalent approximate reduction in the number who work part-time hours. These details reiterate the previous statement regarding the increase in the hours worked, mainly by women, within the care sector.

		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Full-time	Men	1,360	1,387	1,390
	Women	1,487	1,566	1,621
Part-time	Men	327	312	303
	Women	2,654	2,626	2,568
Total	Men	1,687	1,699	1,693
	Women	4,141	4,192	4,189
Total %	Men	28.9%	28.8%	28.8%
	Women	71.1%	71.2%	71.2%

Female / male split of Gwynedd Council staff by Department, 31 March 2019



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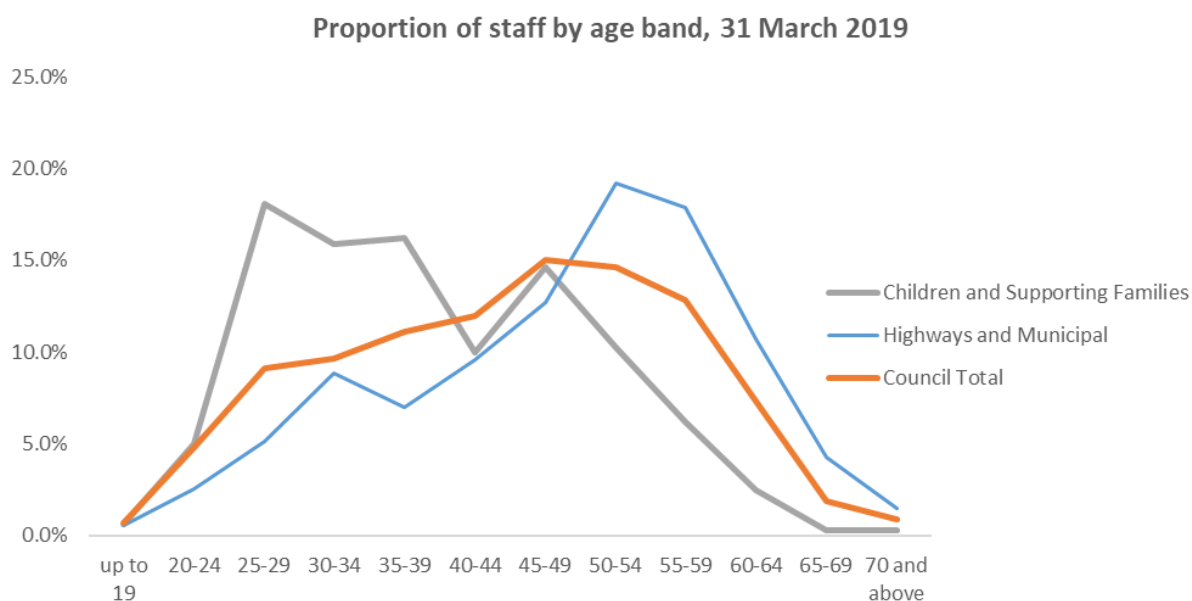
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3. Age profile of Council staff

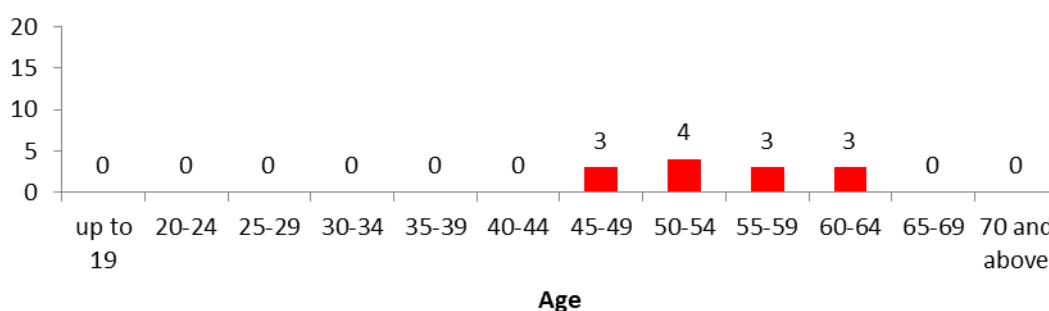
The age profile of Council staff as it appeared on 31 March 2019 is noted here. It shows that over 64.5% of the Council's existing workforce is older than 40 years old (64% in 2017/18) while 37.5% are older than 50 years old (36% in 2017/18). This small, yet gradual, increase in the number of staff who are older than 40 years old (and 50 years old) over a number of years, coupled with the reduction in staff turnover over the previous two years, is an important factor to consider as part of the need to give genuine attention to workforce planning across Council services.

The graph below shows the Department which has the youngest age profile and the Department with the oldest age profile, as well as the age profile for the entire Council.



See below an illustrative table providing a clear picture of the current age profile of the Corporate Management Group (heads of department, directors and Chief Executive).

**Number of Council Staff by age band,
31 March 2019: Grade Head of Service or above
(not including teachers)**



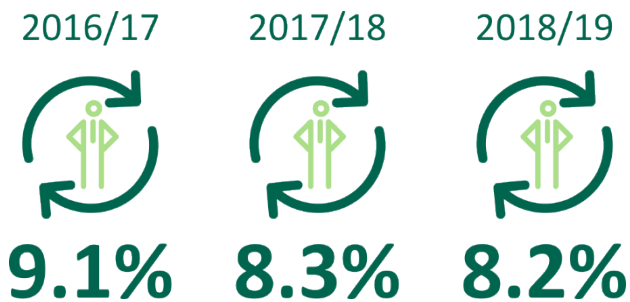
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4. Staff Turnover

Historically, turnover within the Council has been comparatively stable but there has been a pattern of a small increase over the years up to 2015/16. However, turnover has reduced in the past two years and has stabilised on slightly higher than 8%. This is contrary to the national pattern within the public sector in general (the latest figures published for the sector shows turnover of approximately 15% on average).

The largest turnover is seen within the Children and Supporting Families Department (17.7%), the Economy and Community Department (16.4%) and Highways and Municipal (10.2%), whilst turnover is at its lowest within the Environment Department (6.0%) and the Education Department (6.4%).



The fact that the turnover level is relatively low (and is reducing), along with the information that the age profile is showing an increase, is one element that needs to be monitored in the context of our ability to ensure service continuity in the medium and long term.

In light of this, work (jointly with the Research and Information Service) is being currently undertaken to facilitate managers' access to information that shows details regarding turnover and age within individual services whilst another work stream focuses on identifying and developing talent within the Council as well as attracting the talent from beyond the existing workforce e.g. apprenticeship schemes, specialists of tomorrow, etc.

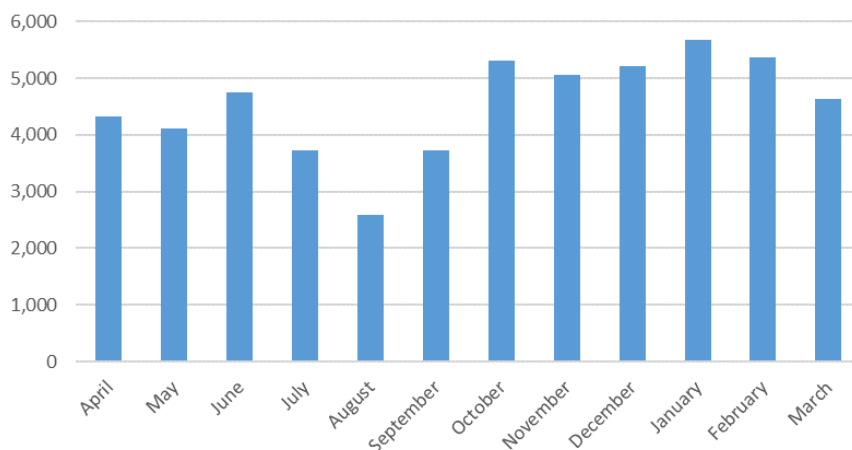
5. Sickness Absences

The number of days lost due to sickness across the Council reduced to 8.72 days per head on average in 2017/18, compared to an average of 9 days per head in 2016/17 (8.44 days per head in 2015/16). An increase to 9.45 days per head on average was seen in 2018/19, namely the highest level during the last ten years. However, this level remains amongst the lowest in Welsh local authorities. The following table shows the levels of sickness absences, month on month, during the year.

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Sickness days per month 2018/19



The sickness absence, in 2018/19, is at its highest within the Residential and Day Service (17.03 days), Community Care Service (14.25 days), and the Cleaning and Catering Service - Education (13.03 days), whilst sickness absence is at its lowest within Gwynedd Consultancy (4.78 days) and Economy and Community Department - excluding Leisure (5.14 days).

It is important to note here that 41.4% or 2,435 (2,542 in 2017/18) of Council staff were not absent at all due to sickness over the past year.

A working group of officers meet regularly to review individual cases of absence and naturally focus their efforts within those services where sickness levels are high. Reviews of regular cases are undertaken within the care services where sickness absence is at its highest, and specific attention is given to trends, which has led to joint campaigns between the Occupational Health Unit and managers of relevant services.

Some output from that work was proven during 2018/19 as sickness absence levels within the Community Care Service, although they remain high, have reduced.

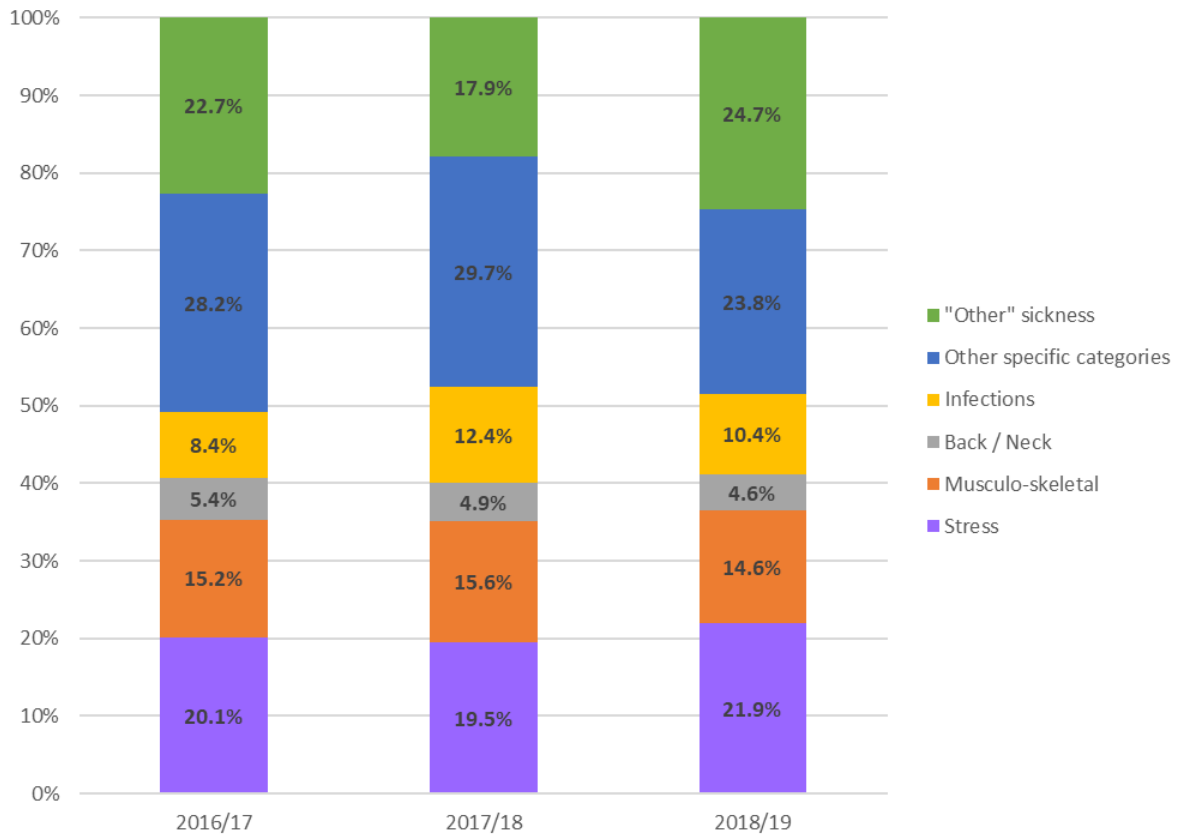
These efforts will need to be intensified over the coming year and consideration will need to be given to what more can be done to promote health amongst the care workforce mainly.

The following table gives a further analysis of the type of sickness which has been recorded for absences over the last three years. This information is used to steer the discussion when considering the content of the programme to promote health and well-being annually.

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Sickness absence per category, 2016/17 to 2018/19



The fact that the percentage of sickness absences recorded as "Other Illness" has increased to almost 1 in every 4 cases is concerning, in particular as a gradual reduction has been seen in the use of "Other Illness" prior to this year (the rate was as much as 1 in every 3 cases a few years ago).

Last year and the previous year, it was reported that reducing the number of sickness cases recorded as "Other" was one of the objectives in this area and we succeeded to do so. It is inevitable that some types of sickness is recorded as "Other" but there is now evidence that this is not the explanation for the majority of absences recorded in this way. A specific campaign will be undertaken by the Support Service to challenge every sickness recorded as "Other" during the year to come, in an attempt to ensure that staff receive the appropriate support when they are ill.

There remains suspicion that some cases of stress-related absence is being hidden under "Other". Nevertheless, note that the percentage of stress-related absences recorded have also increased. This, in itself, justifies the efforts and the current time invested to focus on mental well-being in the Council. The impact of this time invested will become clearer over the next years and will show whether what is being done to raise awareness and share good practice about mental well-being is succeeding or not.

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6. Organisational Learning and Development

We reported last year that the number of face-to-face training days provided by the corporate Learning and Development Service reduced gradually from 3,043 in 2013-14 to 1,389 in 2017/18. In 2018/19, the number of those days increased to 3,383 and mainly as a result of the fact that a substantial increase was seen in the number of workshops held with individual teams, as a follow-up to the training provided to all managers on "Ffordd Gwynedd". Those workshops have included supporting managers to introduce specific elements of the "way of working" to their teams, e.g. performance and work-flow management, as well as workshops on behaviours, managing change and team development. The change, compared with recent years, is one sign that the activity associated with developing the "way of working" has increased significantly across the Council. We anticipate that this pattern will continue, over the coming year, with requests for assistance on specific aspects of introducing "Ffordd Gwynedd" to a broader audience intensifying.

Another significant contribution to the increasing number of workshops during 2018/19 is the demand to upgrade information technology skills amongst the workforce. A total of 23 of these workshops were held during the year with forecasts that the number will increase again during 2019/20. This increase, is not only due to the use of new technology and software across the Council, but also as technology is fast becoming a part of the work of every member of staff.

The number of e-learners (who used the resource) has again bucked the pattern reported on over the past years i.e. dropped from 2,119 in 2017/18 to 1,178 in 2018/19. A substantial increase was seen in the number in 2017/18 as a result of campaigns to encourage staff to undertake e-learning training in specific fields, and to that end, the reduction in numbers for last year comes as no surprise. However, it is continued to believe that e-learning training remains an effective and convenient way of raising awareness about specific matters and is one that contributes towards the development of individuals. As a result, the work of producing quality packages continues to be one of the priorities of the Organisational Learning and Development Service with a view to ensure that those packages are fit for purpose.

One of the current priorities of the Council Plan is to put an Apprenticeships Scheme at work. During the year, we were successful in attracting an investment of £300,000 from the Cabinet to appoint at least 20 apprentices. These apprentices are to be appointed in many fields across the Council, including engineering, information technology and care. This Scheme is considered to be one that will not only contribute towards local employment, but also one that will contribute towards ensuring the continuity of Council services in the future.

This Scheme, alongside our Managers and Specialists of Tomorrow Schemes, as well as the emphasis on developing existing staff, form an important part of our efforts to identify and develop talent.

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7. Pay Structure and Equal Pay

The Pay Policy for 2019/20 was approved by the Council at its meeting on 7 March 2019. The National Joint-Committee for Local Government Workers reached an agreement on pay increases for the two years from 1 April, 2018, which has meant that the Council's minimum wage, since the 1 April 2019, has been established at £9.18 per hour.

This means that the Council's minimum wage is now higher than what is noted as the Living Wage by the Living Wage Foundation (£9 per hour since 1 November, 2018). These changes since April 2019 have led to an amended pay structure within the Council (and every other Local Authority in England and Wales). The implementation of the transfer from the former structure to the new structure was accomplished smoothly with the cooperation of the Human Resources Service, Payroll Service and local representatives of the trade unions.

As reported last year, independent reviews over the past ten years have stated regularly that the Council pays an equal salary for work of an equal value between women and men. This opinion reflects the fact that the Council has a recognised scheme for job evaluation and that the criteria of that Scheme continues to be implemented consistently. A review of the criteria within the Job Evaluation Scheme is currently being undertaken in an attempt to ensure that those criteria reflect the "way of working" that is now being professed within the Council. The need to act cautiously and carefully in this respect is acknowledged in order to ensure that we will not undermine the robust arrangements that are currently in place. As a result, it is not anticipated that an amended Scheme will be introduced for some time.

However, the pay gap between women and men, which can be seen generally in society, also exists within the Council and consideration needs to be given to what can be done to influence that situation. The Council Plan for the 2018-23 period notes that identifying and attempting to remove any obstacles that could prevent women from reaching leading and managing posts within the Council is one of its objectives for improvement. This work has already commenced and is one of the main priorities in the employment field over the coming years.

8. Leadership Development

The project on leadership development focuses on the development of political leaders and also (appropriate for the purposes of this report) on developing leaders within our departments and services.

The Managers' Network was resurrected during the year - following the investment and focus placed on ensuring that every manager has received full training on introducing the "Ffordd Gwynedd" way of working over the previous two years. The emphasis on developing leadership skills within the Network is a key step in the change of culture from "managing" to "leading" within the Council. The first series of the Network was undertaken in its new form, under the leadership of a Group of managers who now coordinate arrangements themselves, during March 2019, and a second series has been planned for Autumn 2019.

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A review of the Council's managerial structures was held during 2018/19. The main drivers for this review were:

- i) identifying those posts that are genuinely managerial and lead on services
- ii) considering whether the Council had an excess of managers
- iii) ensuring that the Council's managerial structure is consistent with the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd

This work led to an improved understanding of the jobs that exercise a managerial function and concluded that 111 posts which genuinely undertake the role of a manager within the Council's structure. It was concluded that this was not an excessive number considering the size of the workforce and the variety of services provided, and that the structural adaptations undertaken as part of the review meant that our working arrangements are consistent with the Ffordd Gwynedd principles.

As a result of confirming those posts that undertake a managerial role, an amended job description for managers was drawn-up and consulted upon. The job description notes the expectations that are common to all managers who lead a team of individuals within the Council in future.

As has already been pointed out, another important development in this context is the establishment of the project on promoting the role of women in leadership. The foundations for driving this work during the year were set, with projections that we will see the fruits of that work over the coming two years.

9. Workforce Planning

There is a close link between this work and the plans already referred to in the context of identifying and developing talent. However, alongside developing talent, every manager must focus on what other possible gaps could arise within his/her team in the future. This could be a gap in expertise and/or capacity that currently exists or a situation where that expertise or capacity does not currently exist.

An item on this expectation from managers' work, was presented at the series of Managers' Network meetings in March 2019. Consequently, the Human Resources Service is collaborating with an increasing number of Council services to consider and establish the needs for workforce planning and then assist them to address the matters being highlighted.

10. Local Conditions of Employment

The efforts to review and ensure that staff working conditions reflect the Council's culture is one of the priorities within the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan. The Group which leads the project has spent much of the year consulting on some of the work conditions as well as ensuring a clear understanding and correct implementation of those conditions amended during the year, i.e. travelling costs, on-call payments, working during unsociable hours and salary protection. In addition, the policy relating to staff's use of social media was updated.

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A new code of conduct for staff will be published soon, along with a change management framework for restructuring services. Further research and consultation has also been undertaken on developing the "on-call" and salary protection policies, in line with one of the promises made within the latest local collective agreement with the trade unions. Work was also undertaken on new policies in the transgender and menopause fields, neither of which were included previously within the local conditions. It is anticipated that those policies will be ready for publication during the coming year.

11. Recruitment and Appointment

See below statistical details regarding the number of jobs advertised by the Council over the last four years together with the number of applications received and also the number of vacancies which needed to be re-advertised. Analysing these details again contributes to our ability to identify fields in which the Council needs to focus its attentions in relation to developing expertise and planning the workforce for the future.

Year	Number of jobs advertised	Number of Applications	Number of jobs re-advertised	Number of applications for the second advert
2015	442	2525	30	106
2016	472	2312	47	179
2017	555	3281	57	240
2018	444	2293	70	187

The number of posts advertised in 2018 has reduced to a level similar to what was experienced back in 2015. However, the number of applications received in response to the advertisements are lower and also the number of jobs where there was a need to re-advertise has increased substantially.

This reflects the problems currently faced in the context of attracting applicants to work in some areas such as the care sector, social work, catering and cleaning, and in the past year, the youth service.

You will be aware of the efforts and attention currently being given to the lack of applicants for jobs in the care sector. This attention has intensified over the past months, with the intention to reduce concerns regarding service continuity and the ability to recruit and retain staff.

Officers in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department will continue to collaborate closely with the Human Resources and Organisational Learning and Development Service in order to succeed in this respect.

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12. Staff Benefits

Considerable efforts have been made recently to extend the benefits offered, in terms of working for the Council, and to raise awareness amongst the workforce of those benefits. There are now 1369 staff who are members of the Vectis discount scheme (which offers significant savings on goods) whilst 150 local businesses already participate in the local discount scheme.

The work of drawing the attention of more staff to these opportunities, as well as seeking to increase the number of local businesses involved in the discount scheme, is continuing with forecasts that numbers will increase further in the coming year.

13. Ffordd Gwynedd Scheme

The first step of immersing all Council managers in the basic principles of Ffordd Gwynedd, in order to ensure an understanding of the concepts, has been achieved to a great extent. This part of the Plan will continue for new managers and future prospective managers however, the focus from now on will be on the second stream, namely to implement a programme that will empower service teams to reflect on their current working arrangements.

Providing managers with this information and these skills is key to enable us to deliver for the people of Gwynedd but it is essential that the expectations now filter down further to every member of staff across the Council. Essentially, we will look to measure the change in the terms of staff behaviour and work culture that is required in order to embed the "way of working" in all Council activity. We will achieve this through a combination of asking, observing and assessing whether staff take ownership of the change and the responsibility belonging to each post.

Furthermore, a programme of support and training has been put in place to extend existing arrangements within some services, where emphasis is placed on the need for a manager and a member of the team to undertake a continuous discussion on attainment, performance and personal development, in order to ensure that evaluation is undertaken promptly and effectively.

As noted previously, every individual Council employee will receive an amended job description that will confirm the expectations of them in the context of the behaviours and the "way of working" attributed to Ffordd Gwynedd. The ongoing appraisal discussion will focus on the expectations on all individuals.

The Ffordd Gwynedd Scheme for the three years to come will highlight these developments as cornerstones for establishing an appropriate culture across the Council.

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CONCLUSIONS

All the statistical information contained here, with careful analysis, is of assistance to managers and those officers who advise them, to plan services and identify in a timely manner those matters which need further research and implementation. This becomes increasingly important within a work culture where decisions made on the basis of full and robust evidence lies at its core.

Furthermore, the other details submitted regarding progress within the various fields prioritised show the steps which are being taken, not only to address existing requirements within the workforce, but also anticipated future requirements.

There are messages that need to be taken seriously if one wishes to ensure the best use is made of the Council's most important resource. The focus for the year to come will be based on these messages with the aim of not only maintaining services, but also on showing progress and continuous improvement in what is offered to the people of Gwynedd.

This means, in line with the information included in the annual report, that our efforts during 2019/20 need to concentrate on;

- i) Workforce planning for the future with specific attention to recruitment problems arising within the care sector
- ii) Promotion of mental well-being and staff health in general
- iii) Reinforcing the work culture and the expected behaviours across the Council
- iv) Developing the current leadership together with introducing steps to encourage more women to undertake senior leadership responsibilities

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

The report is an opportunity for the Cabinet to take an overview of the Council staff's situation and profiles. No comments in relation to propriety.

Head of Finance Department:

The report contains useful information for dealing with employment issues and workforce development. However, the decision submitted for Cabinet approval does not create any additional expenditure commitment, hence I have no comments to add to the report from a financial propriety perspective.

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