

THE CABINET 6/07/21

Present:

Councillors: Dyfrig Siencyn, Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Griffith, Nia Jeffreys, Dilwyn Morgan, Ioan Thomas, Gareth Thomas, Catrin Wager and Cemlyn Williams.

Also in attendance-

Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dewi Morgan (Assistant Head of Finance Department - Revenue and Risk), and Annes Siôn (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 6, 7 and 8: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department) and Delyth Gadlys Williams (Equality Officer)

Items 9 and 10: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Debbie Anne Williams Jones (Education Corporate Services Manager), Owen Owens (Senior Schools Manager)

Item 12: Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department).

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.
An apology was received from Dafydd Gibbard, Chief Executive.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from Councillors - Dyfrig Siencyn, Craig ab Iago, Nia Jeffreys, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas and Catrin Wager for item 10 - Primary, Special and All-through Schools Meal Prices, September 2021 as they had children or grandchildren in primary schools within the County.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2021

The Chair accepted the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2021, as a true record.

6. 2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT, STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020-2024

The report was submitted by Cllr. Nia Jeffreys.

DECISION

To approve and note the content of the 2020-21 Annual Report, Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that it was the 2020-21 Annual Report for the 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan. It was explained that the report was for a very unusual and difficult year as a result of the pandemic and it had been necessary to look at different ways of working which had highlighted inequalities in Gwynedd. It was emphasised that the pandemic had been worse for some individuals and its impact had been more prominent on people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Attention was drawn to the protests held including those by the Black Lives Matter organisation during last year.

It was noted that the service had achieved what it had hoped to during the year, although the timetable had been adjusted and the method of working had changed. It was noted that there had been adjustments to the five objectives which were highlighted. It was explained that it would be necessary to revisit the objectives and adjust these as required following the pandemic. It was emphasised that equality was the duty of all within the Council and the principles must be embedded in the Council's everyday work. Pride was expressed in the plan and confidence was noted that it would be more than just a box-ticking exercise. The satisfaction of being able to drive this work forward was highlighted.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Attention was drawn to objective 3: Building on the work already carried out to embed Equality Impact Assessments as a tool to ensure better decision-making noting the need to look at the assessments made and to also train staff and Councillors to challenge the assessments.
- Pride was noted in the report as well as in the Council's work.
- It was highlighted that some changes were now being seen specifically in some of our male-dominated fields, with more women stepping into these roles and this would encourage more women in the future.
- It was emphasised that the report was easy to read and that equality had been embedded quickly into the Council's decisions.
- The Cabinet Member was thanked for her guidance during the year and it was emphasised that the pandemic had highlighted equality and there was a need to continue to think about equality moving forward.

7. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

The report was submitted by Cllr. Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

To approve the Equality and Inclusion Policy.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that the policy set principles to ensure equality across the Council. It was explained that this Policy replaced the Equality / Equal Opportunities Policy and the Access Policy, which were now very dated. It was emphasised that it was not mandatory to have a policy, however, it was a tool to provide guidance on how the Council ensured that as many people as possible could have full access to Council services with dignity and respect. It was explained that the policy would eradicate any barriers to individuals prior to giving consideration to receiving a service.

It was explained that the Policy, in accordance with the 2010 Equality Act, provided guidance on how to eradicate discrimination and that the Council worked to foster equal opportunities.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was expressed that the work undertaken by the Cabinet Member ensured that equality was at the top of the agenda and was part of everything the Council did.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS ACT (WALES) 2021

The report was submitted by Cllr. Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

To approve the Equality and Inclusion Policy.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that the policy set principles to ensure equality across the Council. It was explained that this Policy replaced the Equality / Equal Opportunities Policy and the Access Policy, which were now very dated. It was emphasised that it was not mandatory to have a policy, however, it was a tool to provide guidance on how the Council ensured that as many people as possible could have full access to Council services with dignity and respect. It was explained that the policy would eradicate any barriers to individuals prior to giving consideration to receiving a service.

It was explained that the Policy, in accordance with the 2010 Equality Act, provided guidance on how to eradicate discrimination and that the Council worked to foster equal opportunities.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was expressed that the work undertaken by the Cabinet Member

ensured that equality was at the top of the agenda and was part of everything the Council did.

9. IMMERSION EDUCATION SYSTEM TOWARDS 2032 AND BEYOND

The report was submitted by Cllr. Cemlyn Williams

DECISION

To approve and implement the vision of the “Immersion Education System towards 2032 and beyond”, to invest £1.1 million of Welsh Government Welsh-medium education capital funding to establish new immersion education sites in Tywyn and Bangor, as well as improving existing facilities at Porthmadog, in accordance with the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and the pleasure of being able to submit the vision was noted. It was explained that Language Centres had been in existence in Gwynedd since the 1980's and at that time they were pioneering. It was emphasised that the vision presented today was just as pioneering and built on the good work of the Centres. Attention was drawn to a financial threat seen two years ago, however, the pandemic period had afforded an opportunity to re-visit the provision.

It was explained that the Cabinet was today being asked to invest £1.1m to expand the sites at Bangor and Tywyn. It was stressed that the vision highlighted a contemporary and flexible provision. It was stated that the proposed system had been presented to the Language Committee and to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and there was unanimous support. It was noted that a meeting had taken place with the New Education Minister and he had identified with the scheme and was anxious to spread the word about the good work undertaken here in Gwynedd. It was emphasised that it was heartening that there was support for the Plan.

The Head of Education added that adding two new locations for the Language Centres was very exciting. It was noted that last year had been successful and the service had been re-purposed as it was not possible to have face-to-face meetings. It was explained that re-purposing had ensured that more children had received support and it was noted that this had highlighted that technology was key in the future. Attention was drawn to the fact that the new model looked similar to the Middle School model with year 5 to year 9 children being taught together. It was also emphasised that the welfare of children was central and the new model ensured that children attended their school for a day a week to continue to develop a relationship with their peers.

The Education Corporate Services Manager noted that the needs of children were totally central to the system together with raising awareness of the

importance of Welsh-medium education. It was explained that the new system would work in partnership with schools for joint provision. It was emphasised that the day in school for pupils within the immersion system was an opportunity for pupils to integrate back into the school following the immersion period. Everyone was thanked for participating in the discussion including the learners themselves.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- The department was thanked for its work leading on this across Gwynedd and it was noted that if other counties followed then the Government would need to fund them as the commitment was needed in order to support the expenditure. It was asked what would happen in terms of the staff, it was noted that more centres would mean the need for more staff and therefore there would be an increase not a reduction.
- Concern was stated about the grants that pay for the work as Gwynedd was the authority that received the highest percentage of funding regionally, and it was explained that the funding should be given specifically to the authority and not to the region.
- The investment was welcomed and specifically in Bangor as the demographics were different to the rest of the County. It was asked about the time in school and why one day a week - and if this could be increased to two. It was explained that a balance was required and if there were three days' immersion and two days in school, then this would not be sufficient time for immersion. It was also explained that the course had been shortened.
- In terms of funding the system, it was noted that there were three sources of funding, and it was asked if a discussion had taken place with schools to take ownership and contribute to the system. It was noted that a discussion had taken place in the Schools' Budget Forum and Headteachers' Forum and there was support as the sum was not high and there would not be a major impact on individual schools.
- It was asked if specific locations had been determined for the new sites in Tywyn and Bangor. It was noted that a location had been identified at the Ysgol Tywyn site and a discussion was on-going with Bangor Schools. It was explained that there was a location within the main Ysgol Eifionydd building for the developments in Porthmadog and this would ensure that immersion education would be more of a part of the school rather than a cabin on the outskirts.

10. PRIMARY, SPECIAL AND ALL-THROUGH SCHOOL MEAL PRICES - SEPTEMBER 2021

The report was submitted by Cllr. Cemlyn Williams

DECISION

Not to raise Primary, Special and All-through School meal prices in September 2021.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that permission was sought not to raise the price of school meals in September 2021. It was noted that annually the schools income target increased in line with inflation. The situation was compared with other counties in Wales and it was noted that if it was to be raised then Gwynedd would be amongst the highest counties in terms of the price of school meals.

It was noted that there would be a financial gap and this gap needed to be addressed. The Assistant Head - Revenue and Risk noted that the possibility of not increasing the price of school meals had been addressed when setting the budget for the year.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that this sum was small but was an important part of supporting vulnerable families.
- It was explained that many families had had a hard time this year and may not be eligible for free school meals, therefore it was necessary to support families and to keep the price as low as possible.

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

The report was submitted by Cllr. Dilwyn Morgan

DECISION

To note and accept the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that the department was at the forefront with the new performance challenge system. It was explained that the timetable had been very challenging and officers were thanked for their input. It was stated that the department had ensured that work proceeded with regular talks about the measures. It was added that improvement priorities were now the basis of the risk register.

Attention was drawn to the projects in the Council Plan, noting that work was proceeding as anticipated with the Strategy for Keeping Families Together. It was added that this would be submitted to the Cabinet soon. In terms of supporting the Well-being of People, it was explained that this had been difficult over the pandemic period, however, work had now recommenced to focus on responding to the challenges and side-effects of the pandemic. It was explained in terms of ensuring that families and children with autism had access to the support they needed, that a draft Autism Plan had been drawn up and concern was noted about the waiting list for assessments.

In terms of the department's concerns, it was stated that the capacity of the workforce was a priority with a shortage in the required number of social workers. It was also emphasised that there was concern regarding the WCCIS system, which held the department's records of cases and families, and it was explained that the matter was being discussed at a national level. In terms of measures, the Cabinet Member noted that he was completely happy with the department's performance and specifically that 45% of the children open to the department lived with parents/family or friends that corresponded to one of the department's priority projects.

It was noted that the department was looking to stay within budget this year, however, it was emphasised that the department was not aware of who would require support during the year.

The Corporate Director added that a number of the officers felt the pressure as a result of the department's capacity. It was added that the number of children staying at home or with family or friends had meant less need for placements.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Thanks was given for the report and the development of an Autism strategy was welcomed as there were evident challenges with the waiting lists on the social impact and the mental health of these young people. The need to ensure equality and equal support to the individuals was highlighted.
- Thanks was given for the report and it was noted that it highlighted the Council's day-to-day work and the department was congratulated on its work.

12. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The report was submitted by Cllr. Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

To note and accept the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the pandemic had given the department several challenges and now it was pleasing to be able to sit back and look at where the department was in terms of further work. Attention was drawn to the schemes in the Council plan.

Firstly, it was highlighted that the Suitable and Sustainable Care Provision for the Future scheme was continuing and the need for nursing homes in Llŷn was highlighted. It was explained that there were plans afoot for the Penrhos Site. The second scheme was Re-designing Care Services. It was emphasised that work was proceeding to create a flexible Service tailored for individuals and to

look at how it would be possible to assist individuals to remain home for as long as possible. The third was the Workforce and Recruitment in the Care field and it was explained that work was continuing with this scheme and it was a continuous challenge for the department. Attention was drawn to the successes seen in Tywyn by adapting work patterns and to ensure more established hours for individuals that had led to less staff turnover and a better Service for individuals.

It was noted that in terms of performance that there were moves afoot to use a system to look more consistently at the measures. It was stated that although it was early on in the financial year it was noted that if there was slippage with some of the savings schemes then the department would review the schemes and seek alternative ones.

The Corporate Director added that the department had been working on an integrated scheme with the Health Board. It was explained that it had not been easy, despite the wish to work together and to share the same vision. It was stated that there had been a discussion with the Health Board's Chief Executive and it was explained that she was very supportive of the scheme and if it indicated better results that staff should proceed with the work. Staff were thanked for all their work over the last year and the period had highlighted ways of working in the future.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Front-line staff were thanked for their work over the last few months.
- In terms of the welfare of residents, that receiving a Service through the medium of Welsh was vital, and it was asked how much emphasis was placed on the Welsh language when recruiting. It was explained that recruitment was a continuous challenge; however, it was explained that appointing Welsh-speaking staff in some parts of the county was more of a challenge. In addition, it was noted that the number of non-Welsh-speaking staff who applied for a post was increasing, and it was emphasised that they were persons who wished to learn Welsh and were excited about the department's new way of working.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.50 pm

CHAIRMAN