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## THE CABINET TUESDAY 7 MARCH 2023

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**Present -**

Councillors: Dyfrig Siencyn, Nia Jeffreys, Beca Brown, Berwyn Parry Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Menna Jones, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan and Ioan Thomas.

**Also present -**

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Huw Dylan Owen (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance Department) and Sioned Mai Jones (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 7: Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department) and Debbie Jones (Assistant Head: Corporate Services).

Items 8 and 9: Sioned E. Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department).

Item 10: Catrin Thomas (Assistant Head of Supporting Families).

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillor Craig ab Iago.

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.

### 2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

A declaration of personal interest was received for Item 8 by the Head of Finance since his wife was a chief librarian in another local authority. This was not a prejudicial interest and therefore he did not withdraw from the meeting.

### 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

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 February 2023 were accepted as a true record.

### 6. FFORDD GWYNEDD PLAN 2023-28

The report was submitted by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn.

### DECISION

To approve the adoption of the Plan for the next five years (Appendix 1) which builds on the development of the work culture within the Council.

## DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, explaining that "Ffordd Gwynedd" referred to the way of working that had been adopted within the Council in order to place the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything. It was noted that it had been operational since 2015 when the Plan had been adopted originally and that the previous Chief Executive had been a Ffordd Gwynedd champion. It was added that the current Chief Executive also wished to develop Ffordd Gwynedd further.

It was noted that it was a journey to attempt to realise this culture and it was acknowledged that the Covid period had slowed down the progress that had been made. Gratitude was expressed to the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director, Geraint Owen, for their guidance and enthusiasm.

The Corporate Director explained that the latest review of the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan had been held in 2019 when the current Plan was approved. It was believed that it was timely to update, amend and improve the Plan.

It was reported that the Council's Departments had conducted a self-assessment of the progress as a basis to the latest review and that these self-assessments had been challenged by a working group of members of the Governance and Audit Committee. It was noted that the conclusions and recommendations had been submitted to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in October 2022.

To close, the proposed Plan for the next five years was submitted, which summarised what had been achieved to date and identified the main matters for the 2023-28 period. It was expressed that 9 sub work streams had been submitted in the Plan which could be seen in appendix 1 of the Report.

The Chief Executive expressed his gratitude to the Corporate Director for leading on this work, as well as the working group. It was added that the Plan reflected on the lessons and barriers of the past, continuing with the basic principle of attempting to find better ways of providing what the people of Gwynedd need.

### Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked how this Plan corresponded with equality and ensured fairness to the people of Gwynedd, who were central to the Council's culture.
- In response, it was noted that everything that had been included in the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan had been considered in the context of equality. It was noted that one of the Council's specific improvement priorities was Women in Leadership, which was an important part of this Plan. It was noted that equality and language main-streamed through all of the Plan's activities and was a part of the culture of the Council which had developed over a number of years. Pride was expressed in being able to support and promote this.
- One of the Cabinet Members expressed that he had been a part of a working group that had been looking at Ffordd Gwynedd many years ago and that he strongly believed in this way of working. It was reiterated that everything needed to be looked at through the eyes of the people of Gwynedd.
- The consideration of short processes and making improvements to them was welcomed.

- Enquiries were made about working across departments or with external partners, commenting that this could be cumbersome, considering the systems of some of the Council's key partners. It was asked how the discussion would be held with external partners should they ask the Council to provide something that is contrary to the Ffordd Gwynedd culture.
- In response, it was noted that collaboration was essential, particularly in the Care field. There would be a need to ensure that the systems work well enough and focus on the customer. It was added that some of the Council's external partners had invested in the "Systems Thinking" system and that the Council would continue to attempt to influence its partners.
- It was believed that the commitment to look at Council services through the eyes of the users deserved praise. It was acknowledged that this change would not happen overnight, however, praise was expressed that the Council was taking the opportunity to review and learn in order to ensure continuous improvement.
- It was noted that attempting to overturn bureaucratic arrangements and returning to the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd was a task.

## **7. ARFON POST-16 EDUCATION PROJECT**

The report was submitted by Cllr Beca Brown.

### **DECISION**

To authorise further work to be done with the stakeholders who make up the Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium in order to develop possible models for post-16 education in Arfon which derives from the informal engagement undertaken on post-16 education in Arfon in the Autumn term 2020.

### **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted, which requested Cabinet approval to carry out further work with stakeholders which form the Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium in order to develop potential models for post-16 education in Arfon.

A request was made to revisit the discussions held in the Autumn term 2020, and to encompass them into themes. It was noted that the experiences of the pandemic were likely to steer some consultations and now there were new considerations, bearing in mind that some time had passed since the original discussions. It was proposed to revisit the work in order to come to a conclusion in order to be able to offer the best education and experiences for the young people in the County.

It was added that this matter had been under consideration for some time. It was reported that good consultation had happened with the Schools before the pandemic, but that the pandemic period had changed things, e.g. by finding different ways of teaching. Therefore, it was felt that it was timely to revisit the discussions and give a direction to the Schools in the County.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Reference was made to the observations that had been received from the consultation which noted that travelling far had a negative impact on the

education of post-16 learners as well as on the environment. It was asked whether things had changed since the Covid period and whether every option was still on the table.

- In response, it was noted that the picture had changed since the pandemic, e.g. the distance learning that had happened during this period had expanded the possibilities. It was confirmed that every option would be considered but it was assumed that people would wish to see something in between, which strengthened the procedure.
- It was expressed that the Cabinet had rectified one issue by abolishing the post-16 travel pass. Now, it was believed that the choice had been expanded to the children and young people by enabling them to give consideration to provisions that are more appropriate to their needs, instead of restricting them to a specific location.
- It was asked whether there were plans to look at the post-16 Education in Dwyfor and Meirionnydd. It was reported that no sixth form provision existed in these parts of the County and that many as a result travelled from Dwyfor to the Arfon area. It was believed that there was a need to look at the provision across the County.
- In response, it was noted that the first step was to look at the Arfon area as this was where the sixth form existed. It was reported that it was proposed in the future to look more extensively across the County in order to reach the aim of rationalising the procedure across Gwynedd.
- The proposal to revisit the provision was welcomed and it was believed that it was relevant to look at all ideas. It was asked whether demography would be considered as there was less funding for the primary schools. It was believed that it was important to look at the impact in the future.
- In response, it was noted that it could take years for pupils to settle in secondary education and that small primary education establishments were at a disadvantage in terms of funding. It was confirmed that the Education Department was looking at this carefully and was seeking to make more efficient use when funding.

## **8. CYNGOR GWYNEDD AS THE LEAD AUTHORITY FOR LMS CYMRU (LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM)**

The report was submitted by Cllr Nia Jeffreys.

### **DECISION**

Cyngor Gwynedd was authorised to act as the Lead Authority for LMS Cymru which means:

- That the Cyngor Gwynedd Procurement Unit will undertake the procurement process for a new LMS which involves procuring a system on a framework, not only for the north Wales Library Consortium but for the Wales Library Authorities which are eager to be members of the LMS Cymru Consortium for the duration of the contract which will last 7 years from 2023/2024.
- That the LMS Cymru arrangement is based on a Consortium Agreement that will commit every member to pay their full proportion of the costs, and any potential

costs such as redundancy costs, for the duration of the new consortium agreement.

- As a part of the Consortium Agreement, to employ a LMS Support Unit staffed by 3 full-time officers (neutral location) for the duration of the agreement.

## **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted, reiterating that the Council was asking to act in a lead role once again, but this time across Wales. Pride was expressed in the work of the Head of Economy and Community Department and the Libraries Service Manager and that they were ready to lead on the LMS Cymru work.

The Head of Economy and Community noted that close collaboration had occurred with Libraries across north Wales, as well as the work of planning a new system. It was confirmed that it would be more effective for every County to work off the same system.

It was reiterated that the Department was asking for the right to put themselves forward formally to be a lead body for LMS Cymru and consequently was asking for a formal procedure.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was expressed that it was good to see Cyngor Gwynedd taking the lead again, and it was confirmed that the new system was being implemented across the whole of Wales.
- It was assumed, in terms of resources, that the rest of the Local Authorities across Wales were contributing.
- It was confirmed that this was correct; although it would not involve additional money for Cyngor Gwynedd there would not be additional costs for the Council either. It was added that the new procedure would ultimately be more effective for Local Authorities.
- Gratitude was expressed for the report, noting that it was good to see Cyngor Gwynedd being progressive across Wales.
- The Cabinet sent its best wishes to the Libraries Service Manager.

## **9. LIVING LIBRARIES - GWYNEDD LIBRARIES PLAN 2023-28**

The report was submitted by Cllr Nia Jeffreys.

### **DECISION**

To approve the Gwynedd Library Service Plan - Living Libraries 2023-28.

### **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted, noting that it was a pleasure to present it and everyone was encouraged to read the clear strategy which showed the work and roles of Libraries. It was reiterated that the Libraries played an important part in the lives of the County's children and the provision for children was reflected upon. It was added, following a recent visit to Porthmadog Library, that broader provisions existed within the Libraries,

such as games and Technological provisions, and that it was nice to see the Plan in real terms.

Reference was made to the statistics in the 2023-28 Library Plan, reporting that almost 30,000 people were members of Gwynedd Libraries. Over 1,500 free reusable period product packs had been distributed through the libraries; it was believed that this showed the difference in terms of the well-being of the lives of the people of Gwynedd which was being delivered by the Libraries.

A report was given on the observations received from service users, which was included on pages 5 and 6 of the 2023-28 Library Plan, which showed the importance of the service for the people of Gwynedd. It was noted that the Libraries were evolving and changing by lending goods and providing advice to the County's residents. Pride was expressed in the strategy which ensured that the service was developing and providing for the benefit of the people of Gwynedd.

The Head of Economy and Community added that it was a requirement on the Council under the Wales Public Library Standards to be publishing a Plan for Libraries. It was reported that the More than Books strategy used to exist but this Plan goes a step further and dispels the myth of libraries being quiet places. It was noted that the Plan showed that Libraries were places that are full of life and highlighted the recent developments and the variety within the Libraries. It was emphasised that reading continued to be important in the Plan as well as health and welfare matters, the Welsh Language, receiving information and the digital element.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was believed that many saw Libraries as cosy and warm places to go during periods of cold weather, as well as places to socialise and read.
- The report was welcomed. A comment was made that the word "Library" nowadays did not convey the provision, liveliness or enthusiasm existing around them.
- It was asked whether the Libraries in Gwynedd provided PECS resources, a visual resource for autistic children or who had additional learning needs.
- It was confirmed that a printing service was available in the Libraries, but there would be a need to check regarding the PECS resources and the Department would report back to the Cabinet Member.
- The work of the Head of Economy and Community Department and the Libraries Service Manager was praised, noting that they were an example of implementing the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd and that they had pushed the Libraries' service forward. They were congratulated on the work.

## **10. SUPPORTING PEOPLE'S WELL-BEING PROGRAMME**

The report was submitted by Cllr Nia Jeffreys.

### **RESOLVED**

1.1. To approve the finalisation of establishing Supporting People Hubs in the 13 regeneration areas.

1.2. Authorisation was given to commission the Supporting People's Well-being Service to assist residents with their well-being needs in the hub and in the area.

## DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that the Assistant Head of Supporting Families was key to this work and that she would explain more about the hubs and work that was being done. It was noted that the Supporting People's Well-being Programme was an example of cross-departmental work across the Council and that it had derived from the work of many services as well as external agencies or organisations such as Citizens' Advice.

A summary was provided of the work and journey of the Supporting People's Well-being Programme by the Assistant Head of Supporting Families. It was reported that this report referred specifically to the network of hubs that had been located in Communities. It was explained that the hubs were attempting to bring the services of the Council and its partners closer to the residents of Gwynedd. It was noted that by now there were 11 hubs operational in the County and that a large number of the needs coming through the doors of the hubs related to the cost-of-living crisis as well as matters involving benefits, council tax, access to fuel vouchers and advice on homelessness.

It was reiterated that not everyone was involved with the hubs and that work needed to be done with some of the residents in order to assist them to re-connect with local networks. It was added that there was a desire to move on to commission the new service and finish the work of establishing the Supporting People Hubs in the 13 regeneration areas in order to correspond with the regeneration framework.

### Observations arising from the discussion

- It was believed that the hubs were very popular, and an example was provided of people queuing in Dolgellau to see the Energy Officer. It was felt that it was easy to gain access to the service and the work that had been done to establish the community hubs was praised.
- It was believed that the hubs made accessing the Council's services easier, ensuring that people in the community obtained the information and support they need.
- Gratitude was expressed for the report, and the Programme was welcomed, particularly considering the challenges facing residents in the community as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.
- The reference to supporting community groups to establish Supporting People Hubs was praised, as well as the local knowledge associated with this, and the extension of this type of provision was welcomed.
- It was noted that it was important to remember about the children and young people in the community and seek to attract and include them, keeping their needs in mind. It was believed that the Hubs could assist to provide somewhere for the children and young people to meet after School.
- Pride was expressed in the collaboration with other stakeholders and that this was a step forward. Attention was drawn to recent praise by an external agency for the work of the Finance Department, specifically relating to the work of Council Tax and our collaboration with the County's residents. The Head of Finance and the Officers were thanked for their work. It was reiterated that the praise for the

- Finance Department was very high and that observations had been received from Citizens' Advice and that this work was an example for the rest of Wales.
- Gratitude was expressed for the work and members were excited to see the Hubs developing and the Plan going ahead.

The meeting commenced at 1:00pm and concluded at 2:00pm.

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**CHAIR**