

THE CABINET 11/06/24

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig Siencyn, Nia Jeffreys, Beca Brown, Berwyn Parry Jones, Craig ab Iago, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Elin Walker Jones and Menna Trenholme.

Also present-

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Huw Dylan Owen (Statutory Director of Social Services), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Dewi Aeron Morgan (Head of Finance Department) and Annes Sion (Democracy Services Officer).

Item 8: Steffan Jones (Head of Highways, Engineering and YGC Department), Emlyn Jones (Assistant Head of Highways, Engineering and YGC Department), Rob Williams (Water and Environment Service Manager) and Rhydian Roberts (Chief Engineer).

Item 9: Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department)

Item 10: Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department)

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.

An apology was received from Councillor Paul Rowlinson and Geraint Owen (Corporate Director).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

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 14 MAY 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2024 were accepted as a true record.

6. ASSET PLAN 2024/25 - 2034/35

The report was submitted by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn

DECISION

- a) To agree to recommend that the Council should adopt the 2024-2034 Asset Management Plan, including:
 - The financial sums recommended in Appendix 1 for the high-risk plans
 - The two sums in Appendix 2 for the moderate risk plans
 - Uncommitting the financial sums in the current Asset Management Plan as specified in paragraph 26 of this report.

- b) To commission the Chief Executive to carry out a further review in one year's time to seek a solution for issues whereby funding cannot be committed at present, as stated in paragraphs 29 to 32 of this report, namely planned maintenance for buildings and the next phase of projects to modernise schools, and report back to Cabinet to confirm division of resources in relation to these two issues.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that Council assets were essential to be able to provide services to the people of Gwynedd. It was explained that the Asset Management Plan was the Council's long-term plan for planning ahead for the next 10 years. It was expressed that this money came from the Welsh Government every year and the Council received around £6.6m per annum and therefore there was a presumption that around £47m of capital funding would be available for the 10-year plan.

It was explained as part of the work to establish the Plan, Departments were invited to note their capital needs over the next 10 years. 70 bids were received with a total value of £129.3m. Every scheme was assessed and placed in risk categories. It was noted that £79m's worth of plans had been placed in the high-risk category which were seen as crucial plans for delivery.

A session was held with all Elected Members to seek their opinion on the plans and to obtain support on how to cut the spending requirements. It was recognised that the choices were difficult but the need to fund some schemes such as the Small Group Care Home for looked after children was highlighted and the suggestion to use additional funding from the council tax premium for some housing schemes. Nevertheless, it was explained that further schemes would have to be cut due to lack of funding and it was suggested that money be taken out of older schemes also.

It was explained that following all of this that the plan was balanced but there was a need to revise it next year, in case some of the schemes were removed due to grant funding which would enable re-allocating the money to other schemes. It was expressed that the Governance and Audit Committee had discussed the plan and was satisfied that the procedure being followed was thorough and

accurate. The Cabinet was asked to recommend it to the Full Council next month.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Concern was expressed about the lack of funding available for high-risk schemes and that this was the result of decisions made in Westminster.
- Some light was shone on the report with money being prioritised on schemes in schools, money for updating harbours and to create a small group home for children.

7. STRATEGIC SAFEGUARDING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The report was submitted by Cllr Menna Trenholme

DECISION

To accept the annual report on the work of the Strategic Safeguarding Panel for the year 2023/24.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that it was essential that Cabinet members were aware of the Safeguarding Panel's work and that they were able to satisfy themselves that the Panel had undertaken the work that was needed both thoroughly and conscientiously. It was explained that the report provided an overview of the panel's work during 2023/24.

The Cabinet Member highlighted some matters in the report and explained that the Panel had updated its remit for the Strategic Panel and the Operational Group during the year. It was expressed that a new Safeguarding Policy had been approved by the Full Council also.

It was detailed that although there had been progress against safeguarding matters that safeguarding in the Children and Adults field was stabilising but that the work continued to be overwhelming. Concerns were highlighted about the DoLS (Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards) service as some individuals had been on the waiting list for up to three years. Attention was drawn to the panel's priorities for the coming year before noting the decision.

The Statutory Director of Social Services guided the Members through the report drawing attention to the main matters. It was explained that the panel was one that convened regularly during the year and looked at all safeguarding work across the council. It was highlighted that the Operational Group supported the work and emphasised that it was a matter for the whole Council, its staff and individuals in our communities.

It was noted there was a concern to highlight with an increase in referrals to the Children's Department and a 248% increase in work relating to safeguarding

concerns about practitioners and those in positions of trust. It was expressed that the number of looked after children was noted to be the same as last year, however there was a reduction in the actual number. However, now that unaccompanied asylum seekers were included in the figure, it appeared to be the same.

It was reiterated that the number of referrals to the Adults Department had also increased substantially and the concerns regarding DoLS were highlighted once more reporting that a further discussion would be held at the Scrutiny Committee during the following week.

It was explained that a Child Practice Review would be held over the coming months following a public court case about a secondary school in the county that would highlight lessons to be learnt as well as implement improvements.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was expressed that safeguarding was a matter of great importance to elected members and that the magnitude of the problem was striking in the face of cuts.
- Attention was drawn to the large increase in safeguarding concerns about practitioners and those in positions of trust. It was noted that it was not possible to identify a reason for this but that amendments to sex education within the education system may have given individuals the confidence to speak out and voice their concerns.
- It was highlighted there were no figures on domestic violence and this was due to it being very difficult to obtain figures about the work being done. Attention was drawn to the fact that the Council had received a 'White Ribbon' accreditation which ensured that the Council adopts a strategic method to end violence against women.
- An enquiry was made in terms of safeguarding training for staff and whether there were any figures on the number of staff who had attended courses on community safety and prevent. It was explained that safeguarding courses were mandatory for staff and the numbers would be reported to the next meeting of the Strategic Panel.

8. LOCAL FLOOD STRATEGY

The report was submitted by Cllr Berwyn Parry Jones

DECISION

To approve the adoption of the Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

To approve delegated right in consultation with the Cabinet Member to complete the document following approval from the Welsh Government.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Cabinet was asked to approve the

adoption of the Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. It was explained following the decision that the document would be sent to Welsh Government to provide its opinion on the strategy, and therefore delegated right in consultation with the Cabinet Member was requested to complete the document after receiving these observations.

It was noted that after creating the draft strategy that the department had gone to public consultation on the document. Disappointment was expressed in relation to the number who had responded to the consultation despite a lot of work being done to promote it. It was highlighted that the strategy noted how the Council would deal with coastal and inland flood risk.

The Head of Department added that there was a statutory requirement for the Council to create a strategy in accordance with the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. It was explained that the Council's previous strategy was in two parts - i.e. the Strategy and the Management Plan but now both documents had been combined to create a full strategy. It was explained when preparing the strategy that the Council was asked to comply with the Welsh Government Framework and the main objectives were highlighted.

It was highlighted that the response to the public consultation had been poor but that this could be seen nationally. It was emphasised that climate change was a contentious issue and that severe weather last winter had shown the extent of the problem.

It was expressed that one of the main actions included in the Strategy is the intention to prepare long-term capital work programmes for managing flood risk and coastal erosion. It was explained that would be a way for the Team to lead and attract grants for future plans.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Gratitude was expressed for the work achieved in Bangor.
- It was asked in terms of funding whether the county received its fair share of the national budget. It was expressed that all submitted plans were scored by Welsh Government and that Gwynedd had been fortunate to obtain support for a variety of schemes. It was highlighted that 4 schemes had been included in addition to the Council's Asset Plan.
- It was highlighted that confusion could exist in terms of who had responsibility for flooding matters, but the Council's front-line staff were thanked for their work in assisting the public when flooding matters arose.

9. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMEBER FOR ADULT, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The report was submitted by Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that it provided an update on the Adults, Health and Well-being field. In terms of the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan schemes, it was highlighted that some projects were being repackaged to ensure clarity and therefore the titles were different to what had been seen in the past. An overview of all schemes was provided and some matters were highlighted as follows.

It was highlighted that in the field of modernising our care resources to meet future needs, the work on upgrading homes in Barmouth and Dolgellau was coming to an end. It was added that the recruitment situation was improving at the home in Bangor and hopefully better use could be made of the new dementia unit over the next period. In terms of the plan to make more use of technology, work to upgrade telecare equipment was going well, and they anticipated the work would be completed by December of this year. It was noted that a project leader had been appointed to lead the work of collaborating with the health services to enable people to live their best life in the community and they would lead the work programme of developing the community resources teams.

Attention was drawn to the department's performance noting that the waiting list to receive occupational therapy assessments was continuing to grow. It was explained that capacity and recruiting therapists had been very challenging but that the new Leader had commenced in post and a lead practitioner had been appointed to fill the gap.

It was emphasised that the percentage of unmet domiciliary care hours had fallen significantly and was at its lowest for a year. It was noted that a provider had been appointed the tender in Blaenau Ffestiniog but there had been no applicants for the tender in the Porthmadog area.

It was highlighted in terms of the performance of the Adults safeguarding services and the Community Resources Team that they had succeeded in managing the risk in 100% of cases. However, the number who were awaiting a DoLS assessment remained a concern with 340 individuals on the waiting list for an assessment at the end of April, as noted in one of the previous items.

In terms of the financial situation, it was explained there would be regular monitoring in an attempt to avoid overspending this year and meetings would be arranged if an overspend under any of the headings was identified.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that it was positive that the number of disabled people having the opportunity to work had increased.
- Concern was expressed about the DoLS situation with such a high number still waiting for an assessment. It was explained that this was a national problem and that the department was trying its best to respond by prioritising assessments. It was added that applications came in

regularly and consequently the numbers were not falling at the rate the department would like.

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

The report was submitted by Cllr Elin Walker Jones

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that it updated the members on the department's work. Attention was drawn to the department's projects within the Council plan as follows.

In terms of the Small Group Homes Scheme, it was highlighted that the department had purchased a property in the Dwyfor area to develop a registered residential home for small groups to enable them to receive their care in Gwynedd. It was explained there would be a recruitment process for posts in this scheme and a recruitment afternoon would be held in Porthmadog during June for the posts of deputy manager and residential workers.

It was added that in terms of the Autism Plan, children, young people and adults were finding it difficult to access the required specialist support. It was highlighted that improving provision was a plan to make it easier for individuals and family to transfer between different services. It was expressed that the team was continuing to work on the Llwybrau Ni project, which would provide social opportunities for young people, breaks for parent and carers of individuals who had an autism diagnosis, who were awaiting an assessment/diagnosis and individuals who would not reach the criteria for specialist services when they transitioned to adulthood. Members of the public were encouraged, if the opportunity arose, to go on the autism bus which provided individuals the opportunity to experience the reality of autism.

It was explained that workforce capacity remained a matter of concern but there was work in the pipeline to try to stabilise the situation. It was highlighted that the department had been part of a national fostering campaign to attract people to consider fostering. Since the last report, Gwynedd had appointed a second recruitment officer for the south of the County.

In terms of the department's measures, it was noted that overall, she was happy with the performance and there was only one measure causing concern for the Member. In terms of the budget it was noted that the department had overspent last year as a result of out-of-county spending, it was expressed that with the small homes scheme operational it was hoped that the services would be maintained internally rather than by external providers.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked whether elected members could become foster parents, it was explained that there were no rules to prevent them from becoming foster parents and it was emphasised that individuals should contact the department if they were interested in fostering.
- Gratitude was expressed for the work of leading the Small Homes Scheme, that would ensure that not only support would be available internally but also within Gwynedd communities.

The meeting commenced at 13:00 and concluded at 14:40

CHAIRMAN