

## CYNGOR GWYNEDD - Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

<b>Title of item:</b>	<b>Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services</b>
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Councillor Llio Elenid Owen</b>
<b>Relevant officer:</b>	<b>Ian Jones, Head of Corporate Services Department</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>11 February 2025</b>

### **1. Decision Sought**

To accept and note the information in the report.

### **2. The reason why the Cabinet needs to make the decision**

In order to ensure effective performance management.

### **3. Introduction and Rationale**

**3.1** The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on what has happened in the areas for which I am responsible as Cabinet Member for the Corporate Services Department. The report will outline what has happened to date against pledges within the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan for 2023-2028; the progress of performance measures; and the latest on the savings and cuts schemes.

**3.2** I wish to remind you that all the matters have already been the subject of a discussion and have been scrutinised by myself at a meeting of the Corporate Services Department's Management Team on 13 January 2025, which also included the Chief Executive and Corporate Director.

**3.3** I am satisfied that the projects being led by the Department, together with the day-to-day performance, are being undertaken within the budget. I wish to note my appreciation of the work of all the officers of the Department and recognise the key contribution they make to supporting the work of the Council.

### **4. Projects in the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-2028 (Priority Areas)**

The Corporate Services Department is leading on 6 projects within the various priority areas of the Council Plan for 2023-2028. I summarise what has been achieved thus far as follows:

#### **4.1 Keeping the Benefit Local**

**4.1.1** The Council is responsible for procuring, or purchasing, a number of goods and services and is keen to try to ensure that local businesses can compete and win these contracts in order to ensure that as much of the Council's expenditure as possible stays local.

**4.1.2** Following a joint decision with all category management and procurement teams it was agreed to hold additional performance challenge meetings for reporting on the results of reviewing contracts. It was agreed to hold two meetings a year and the meetings were held in May and December 2024. The meetings have been an opportunity to review the teams' procurement plans and understand how they are trying to gain social value, value for money, supporting the market and trying to reduce the impact of polluting the environment. The meetings are also an opportunity to note forward work programmes as well as any obstacles experienced by the teams.

**4.1.3** New procurement regulations will come into force during February 2025. Work is being done to identify if there are opportunities in the new regulations to buy local or to support the local market in any way.

**4.1.4** Work continues on developing a communication plan regarding the aim of Keeping the Benefit Local with information updated for the external website and the intranet. In addition, work is ongoing to create new learning materials for Council officers.

## **4.2 Women in Leadership**

**4.2.1** The aim of this project is to increase the number of women who apply for and receive senior positions within the Council by reviewing the employment conditions and the working environment to attract more women to undertake the work in future.

**4.2.2** A Winter series of the popular "*Sgyrsiau dros Baned*" sessions were held with Sioned Williams, Head of Economy and Community holding the November session and Ffion Edwards Ellis, Assistant Head of Special Educational Needs leading the session in January. It was agreed at the latest Project Board to be targeting more of a range in job levels of speakers to include Managers and Team Leaders also with the intention of targeting young women to take the first step. Work is progressing to arrange a Spring / Summer series of sessions.

**4.2.3** The fifth series of the Developmental Programme is half-way through with 12 worthy women from various Council departments being selected to be involved in the series.

**4.2.4** 'Unconscious Bias' training sessions are held over the Winter months by the Learning and Organisational Development Service.

**4.2.5** The Autumn series of the 'Managers' Network' was held to raise awareness of the project. Some men have subsequently been in contact to ask for further information. Work is also underway to create a video for the 'Chief Executive's Live Session' to raise further awareness of the project's work. Also, there is an intention to hold a specific '*Sgwrs Dros Baned*' session for men with speakers from the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department explaining what they have done to change the culture within the Department.

**4.2.6** Council guidance has been updated by the Human Resources Service to meet the need to try and ensure an equal split of men and women on employment panels, whether that be appointment panels / employment appeal / capability etc. which means that this milestone has been met.

**4.2.7** The data on the progress and impact of the project is regularly updated, and the figure of women in managerial positions is currently 41% which is an increase of 11% since the project's establishment. There are differences between Departments and also differences between job

tiers. Data is also collected and analysed on the efficiency of interventions such as the developmental programme.

### **4.3 Ensuring Fairness for All**

**4.3.1** In order to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do, we must identify any barriers that some people face when seeking employment or obtaining services from the Council. It is a statutory requirement for Cyngor Gwynedd, as a public body, to create a plan of what we intend to do over a 4 year period to promote equality. In light of a period of approximately 9 months gathering opinion, the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 was adopted by the Cabinet in March 2024. The Plan consists of 5 Objectives and work has been earmarked under these Objectives over the 4 year period.

**4.3.2** A combination of services from the Council's departments are responsible for delivering the different aspects of the Plan. Work has been undertaken to develop detailed milestones for all areas for 2024/25. Currently, all of the milestones are on track to be completed within the year.

**4.3.3** It is intended to establish a forum / staff forums on equality matters. An invitation has been sent out to staff to show an interest in creating a forum on employment equality matters.

**4.3.4** Progress is being made on preparing an application for a 'Disability Confident' accreditation, with advice being received from an officer who is supporting the scheme in Wales.

**4.3.5** There has been a delay in the work of identifying gaps in the information on care service users, as a result of the fact that a new system to record the details of service managers was being developed, and that it was sensible to wait for the introduction of the new system, instead of adapting the current system. The timetable for completing the development at the moment is December 2025.

**4.3.6** Work is continuing with the development and introduction of a training framework in order to give staff the resources and confidence. An LGBTQ+ training course for managers is in progress and discussions are being held between equality officers and the Learning and Organisation Development Service regarding other priorities.

**4.3.7** Progress is being made on raising staff awareness of the new procedure for holding an equality impact assessment. The new procedure is based on the work of the equality officers of north Wales public organisations, as a result of input from the offices of the Equality and Human Rights Commissioner and Welsh Language Commissioner. The tool adapted for local use is operational. A new version of the equality web-page will be live by 31.1.25 which will include a clearer link, as well as arrangements in place to attend management teams to raise awareness.

### **4.4 Workforce Planning**

**4.4.1** To ensure that the Council is in a position to provide and develop services for the people of Gwynedd, we must ensure that we have the right staff in the right place with the right skills.

**4.4.2** Work continues to conduct the job matrix exercise with Council departments. The intention is to create a 'matrix' of key jobs, assessed on a risk basis to the continuity of key Council services (to include jobs in the caring and education fields), with action plans set out for responding to key areas. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by March 2025.

- 4.4.3** An exercise will be held on the whole process of attracting staff to the Council's workforce, in order to continue to improve the process for everyone involved, but particularly so for job applicants. Work will be done to bring the exact scope of the work together before convening a group of officers from different services who have an input into this part of the work, including in terms of equality, human resources, communication and Ffordd Gwynedd to review, develop and facilitate how job applicants reach us and the experience they have when applying for jobs with the Council.
- 4.4.4** Work continues on attempting to establish a work experience plan, as another thread to attract people into the Council's workforce. Basic arrangements are in place to support individuals who come to the Council for work experience.
- 4.4.5** The dashboard providing information on mandatory training has been completed. The work of developing a specific workforce training plan for the general staff category is underway and a new framework has been created and submitted to the Corporate Management Team.
- 4.4.6** Once again, the period to attract apprentices or professional trainees to come to work for the Council has commenced. The period where managers express an interest and submit applications opened on 6.1.25. During March 2025, managers will be informed whether their application for 2025 has been approved. Subsequently, the recruitment period will commence.

#### **4.5 Promoting Use of the Welsh Language by the Residents of Gwynedd**

- 4.5.1** Specific projects will be held that will promote the use of the Welsh language and increase the opportunities to use Welsh in the community. This will include increasing the use of the Welsh language when engaging with public and community services.
- 4.5.2** Meetings were held with each headteacher or representative to obtain their input into the Language Strategy Work Programme 2023-2033 and the work to develop the work programme continues following their input. As a result, work on a few projects has commenced such as updating new language awareness training for councillors and members of staff, and work on other established projects such as the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board's Bilingual Workforce Recruitment Project has continued.
- 4.5.3** Good progress has been made with the 'place names' project. The Project Officer will visit two primary schools and one secondary school to present the Council's Place Names Map and discuss place names in general. At the request of the Caernarfon Civic Society, a consultation was held on the signs of the old town names, with the intention of installing plaques in different locations. A response was sent to the Council's Biodiversity Officer who wanted information for the interpretation boards at Eglwys Llanddeiniolen. Formal applications were made to Highways, Engineering and YGC Department to adopt some local names on streets as statutory names. As part of the 'Yr Enw a'r Hanes' series, two articles were published on the Intranet.
- 4.5.4** A decision was made to commission an external company to undertake the work of Prosiect 15. A project brief was created and it will be posted on the Sell2Wales procurement system. The contract will fund the undertaking of creative work for the year and create a report on the project's future options in order to develop it according to the audience's needs.

- 4.5.5** Following the seal of approval from Cabinet to proceed with Menter Iaith Gwynedd's outsourcing arrangements, the work to support the initiative continues and arrangements will be made for the transfer of staff on 1 April 2025.
- 4.5.6** Members of the Gwynedd Language Forum decided that a sub-group needed to be established to look at the attitudes of young people and their parents towards the Welsh language when pursuing further and higher education. A Gwynedd Language Forum Young People sub-group has been established and has met. The Forum is organising a consultation to collect the response of young people regarding their attitude and use of the Welsh language. A questionnaire and focus groups will be shared with results shared with the sub-group. The next full Forum meeting will be held mid-January.
- 4.5.7** The collaboration with Bangor University on two research projects will continue. The first looks at people's attitudes towards the Welsh language and the use made of it via on-line questionnaires and the work of analysing the results is currently being undertaken. The second project focuses on public language choice when using front-line services provided by or on behalf of Cyngor Gwynedd. The public's use of language was observed at Siop Gwynedd receptions, libraries and leisure centres in three different geographical locations in Gwynedd, namely Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau. Data about people's language choice was also collected when they contacted the Galw Gwynedd centre, which provides a front-line service to deal with phone calls from residents across the county. A data sample of over 3200 was obtained. The work of analysing the results is currently taking place with a view to formulate recommendations to be included in the Gwynedd language strategy programme of work, to promote the use of Welsh.

#### **4.6 Strategic Review of Health and Safety Management**

- 4.6.1** The project examines the strategic management of health and safety within the Council and how it ties into overall governance and performance systems. It entails undertaking a full review of the management system in its entirety.
- 4.6.2** Regular progress meetings are held with the Information Technology Service to monitor development work on the introduction of a new health and safety software system across the Council. Significant work is being carried out in the background to enable the historical information to be transferred to the new system format. The system dashboard has been created, and the information from the old system has been successfully transferred.
- 4.6.3** Significant mapping has taken place on the second phase of the system, which will see developments in relation to risk register, risk assessments, audits and other functions. This work has been presented to the Information Technology Service.
- 4.6.4** Work continues on the integrated model of health and safety management. At an annual meeting with the Corporate Management Team last year, it was decided that a gap analysis was needed on the first two models. A questionnaire was produced outlining the key steps of both models so that managers have a clear and comprehensive format to follow. A questionnaire has been sent to all managers via the Corporate Health, Safety and Well-being Forum.
- 4.6.5** As part of work to review the communication and resources system to assist Managers and Assistant Heads across the Council, a review of the information available is on the intranet to ensure that health, safety and well-being are communicated clearly, concisely and easily for staff to find relevant information. As well as that, work is being done to develop a dashboard for Heads of Department,

information has started to be gathered and discussions are being undertaken with the Research and Information Service about creating the dashboard.

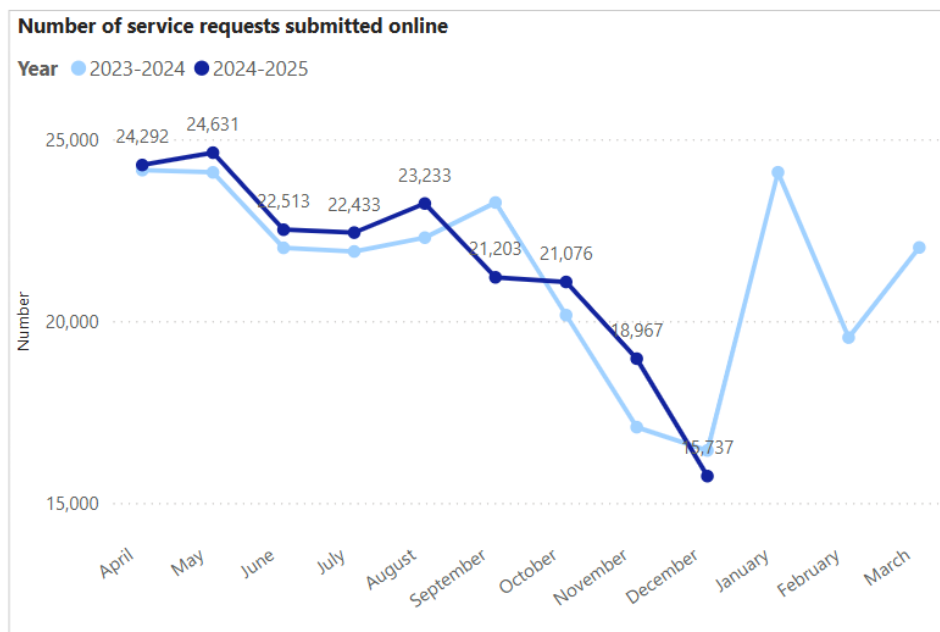
## 5. Performance

5.1. The Department's services are performing well and I confirm that I am pleased with their current performance. See below for some of the highlights.

5.2 The **Communications and Engagement Service** enables the Council to share information and engage in a two-way conversation with the people of Gwynedd, staff and elected Members of the Council. The service also enables the public to self-serve on Cyngor Gwynedd's website 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and offers a more cost effective way to contact the Council for a service

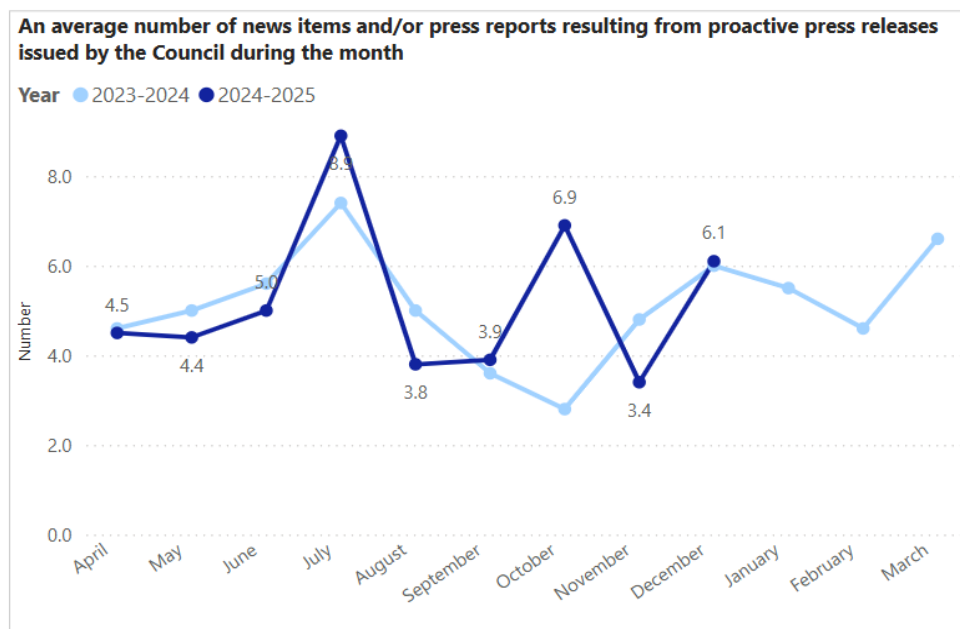
5.3 In terms of the number of service applications being submitted on-line, the number of November applications this year was 1,883 more than November 2023. Many services have seen a small increase in the number of applications submitted but a larger increase was seen in the following applications, compared with November 2023: Ordering a recycling centre slot - 1,007 more, Application for school admission - 158 more, Council Tax change of address - 107 more. The number of applications in December this year was 706 lower than December 2023.

5.4 The main reason for this was that the Waste and Recycling Service was not receiving Garden Waste applications in December this year. 880 applications were received in December 2023. Also, the self-service was not available for almost a day during Storm Darragh as the servers were down. Over the coming months, whilst the emphasis will be on integrating My Account with the new schools admission system of the Education Department and with the new system of the Waste and Recycling Service and in order to enable more efficient working, we will also work on introducing new services, e.g. Application to change an ordinary water course.



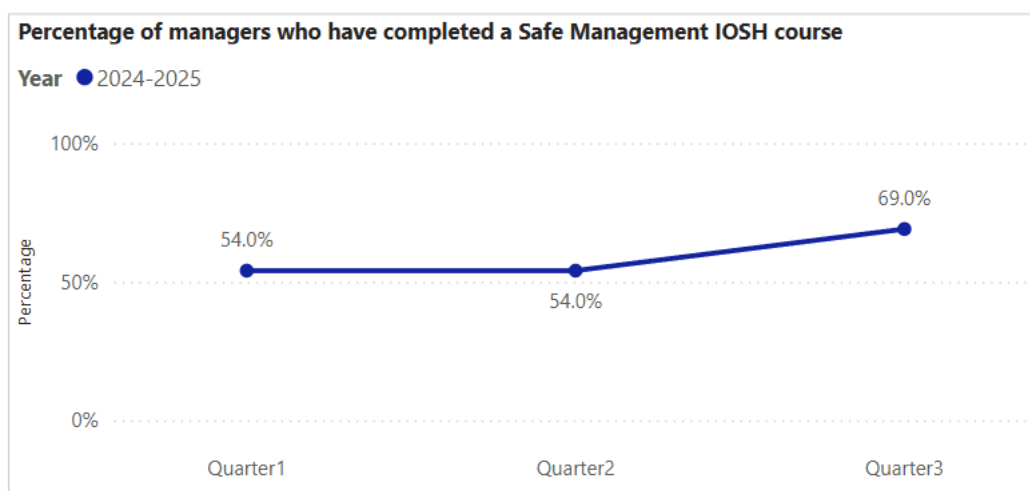
5.5 During November and December, 13 interactive statements to the press were published and it led to 66 news items. The statement which performed best by far was the election of the new Council Leader, which received local and national attention. Due attention was also paid

to Council statements, prosecuting a company for health and safety offences following a fatal accident and completing the work on the *Llewyrch o'r Llechi* mural in Blaenau Ffestiniog. In addition, over the two months, 75 enquiries were received from the press. Matters relating to Ysgol Friars continued to draw the media's attention with a number of enquiries being complex ones. Numerous enquiries were received about the impacts of storms Bert and Darragh, election of new Leader and Planning matter in the Penisarwaun area.



- 5.6 The **Democracy and Language Service** supports the Council's democracy arrangements and continuously promotes the Welsh language.
- 5.7 Menter Iaith Gwynedd officers came out on top in the Mentrau Iaith Cymru awards. There was an award of excellence for the work undertaken with the Croeso Cymraeg project - North Wales Africa Society. It was also good to hear praise at a seminar by the Welsh Language Commissioner on the good practice of language strategies for Cyngor Gwynedd's decision to produce a 10-year rather than 5-year Welsh language strategy.
- 5.8 Work continues to improve the provision for web-casting and also conduct hybrid meetings within the Council with a number of provisions in progress.
- 5.9 The **Health, Safety and Well-being Service** enables leaders to be skilled in the field by providing competent guidance, facilitate and evaluate an effective health, safety and well-being management system.
- 5.10 The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases or Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) places a requirement on employers to report specific incidents to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). During quarter 3, a total of 14 RIDDOR incidents were reported to the Health and Safety Unit. Of those reported in quarter 3, six had been reported within 10 days. There are various reasons why the other 8 were reported late, e.g. late HS11 form, incorrect information from the hospital, time asking managers to be able to decide whether an incident in the home met RIDDOR criteria, a delayed response from managers and the availability of advisers due to site visits to follow up etc.

- 5.11** The Health, Safety and Well-being Service provides IOSH training to managers and team leaders across the Council. The aim of the training is to develop staff understanding of their responsibilities in terms of their health and safety and what is expected of them. In terms of the number who have attended the training, an increase of 54% has occurred during quarter 2. Encouragingly, an additional 11% (71 managers/team leaders/school headteachers) have registered for the 2025 course. Work will continue over the coming months to fill the courses and increase this percentage slightly again.



## **6. Financial Situation / Savings and Cuts**

- 6.1** Financial projections for 2024/25 were submitted to the Cabinet's meetings on 21 January 2025, where an underspend situation of (£33k) was projected for the Department. This is an increase of (£10k) in the underspend since the last review at the end of August 2024, and reflects the Department's efforts to freeze spending in order to assist the Council's financial situation.

- 6.2** When preparing the 2024/25 Budget, savings schemes / cuts to the value of £242,540 were to be taken out of the budget. Of those, £174,010 have already been realised, £26,920 (2 schemes) are on track to be achieved on time. With one savings scheme equivalent to £41,160, where there is a risk to realise the saving in full. The Department has identified that up to £14,000 of the cut can be achieved, and therefore there is a risk to achieve £27,610 with the Department looking at how the rest can be achieved.

## **7. Views of the Statutory Officers**

### **7.1 Chief Finance Officer**

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of the Corporate Support Department

### **7.2 Monitoring Officer**

No observations to add in relation to propriety