CYFARFOD	Cabinet
DYDDIAD	13 September 2016
TEITL	Housing, Customer Care, Libraries, Deprivation and Equality Performance Report
PWRPAS	Receive and note the information in the report
AWDUR	Councillor Ioan Thomas
SWYDDOG CYSWLLT	Morwena Edwards, Corporate Director

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on what has been achieved in the field of my responsibility as a Cabinet Member for Housing, Customer Care, Libraries, Deprivation and Equality. This report will include an outline of the latest against the pledges made in the Strategic Plan; the performance measures, and the latest on efficiencies and cuts.

2.0 Reasons for recommending the decision

To ensure effective performance management.

3.0 Strategic Plan Projects

A brief progress report on the Strategic Plan projects 2016-17 can be seen below.

To remind members, the Strategic Plan wording is noted in blue.

T7 - Working together against poverty - The purpose of this project will be to adopt and implement a Tackling Poverty Strategy in Gwynedd in collaboration with partners and to implement a wide range of plans. Implementing the Strategy will involve interventions in four areas namely: Digital Inclusion (jointly with Digital Gwynedd and Citizens Online), Financial Inclusion, Economic Inclusion (jointly with the Improving People's Access to Work Package) and Responding to Welfare Reform.

Project Progress : I reported last time that Spatial Poverty and Population Poverty is the strategy's priority and that we had agreed to proceed to implement the work programme.

Spatial Poverty - Those communities who suffer most from poverty. We will prioritise those communities who already receive support via national schemes, but will also give attention to other communities in Gwynedd that suffer poverty.

Population Poverty - Some specific population groups e.g. One parent households on low income.

Work is proceeding to divert day to day resources and current targeting (Financial, Digital Inclusion) on the grounds of the strategy's priorities.

Another activity that is proceeding is that Benefits, Council Tax and Economy and Community staff have received training in financial literacy in order to be able to support persons in need. Hand in hand with this awareness raising sessions have been undertaken jointly with banks in order to raise awareness of financial issues. Sessions have been conducted in Libraries across the county in order to offer financial and digital support.

T9 - Housing Supply Strategy - The purpose of this project will be to implement our strategy to increase the supply and variety of housing in order to ensure that our housing supply is suitable for the needs of the people of Gwynedd. The project will lead to different solutions in different areas.

Project Progress :

Establishing Affordable Housing for Gwynedd residents in rural areas - Establish the funding model in order to increase affordable housing in rural areas, and it is anticipated that we will have commenced building a total of 31 new homes for residents during 2017/18.

The work of submitting three planning applications is underway with the intention of consulting locally on the Penygroes scheme, which is the most mature of the three, in September. Should the three planning applications be successful, up to 39 homes would be provided throughout Gwynedd.

Bringing Empty Homes Back Into Use - We will also aim to develop between 10-15 units by bringing empty homes back into use, which is in addition to the annual total of 40 to 50 units.

A joint meeting took place with the empty homes team and the North Wales Housing Association in order to share information regarding which resources are available with the intention of looking at providing possible housing and support for homeless people. We are in the process of contacting house owners who have declared a wish to sell and the discussion will take place during the next few weeks.

Bringing empty houses back into use is a daily part of the Service's work and this work is progressing as expected. Since the beginning of the year, the Service has succeeded in bringing more than 20 Empty Homes back into use.

Provision for homeless people - It is anticipated that further work will be required during 2016/17 prior to commencement of developing a provision for homeless people.

The initial meeting has taken place and the work of gathering information regarding what is needed to support homeless people is being undertaken.

Provision for older persons to promote independence - We will have identified the area where provision is needed for older persons, and the type of provision required. The recommendations submitted as part of the Older People Accommodation Strategy will be implemented within this work as well as any recommendations from the Capacity and Sustainability of the health and care organisation project (G7).

A meeting has been arranged with the Commissioning Service and Housing Associations to analyse data in terms of the areas identified to see what gaps exist. This will give us a fuller picture regarding the type of provision required in the areas noted in the Older People Accommodation Strategy.

4.0 Performance

Appendix 1 reports on the performance measures associated with my portfolio.

I reported last time that work had commenced regarding confirming the purpose of the Customer Care units (Customer Care, Registration, Information and the Web Team) and what measurements should be used to measure that purpose. Staff are a vital part of this process and as part of this they also consider what barriers prevent them from achieving their purpose.

Although the Web team is in the process of sharpening its purpose and measures, they respond pro-actively to the information they have and what exactly their customers tell them. In their efforts to try and continuously improve the website, currently one of the main measures used are the website users who are dissatisfied or cannot find information. Further to this they then try to find out why they are unhappy or cannot find the information. By understanding the reason behind this it is possible to respond to the complaint e.g. Several applications have recently been submitted regarding bins and many have noted that the general forms that exist to order bins are not easy to use. In response to this, it has been possible to submit a more specific form on the website to order bins.

Until the new measures have been confirmed and in place for reporting I will report on the current measures that are in *Appendix 1*. Some of the service's current measures show some deterioration this year compared to the performance of previous years. For example, the percentage of calls that are not answered by Galw Gwynedd. One of the main reasons for this is the recent reduction in staff, which has meant that the average time it takes to answer the phone has increased, and thus customers are more likely to put the phone down.

Work is also continuing in terms of confirming the purpose and what measures measure that purpose across the Housing field. I reported last time that the Homelessness Unit report on the number of days it has taken to resolve a homeless issue (i.e. from the first point of contact to the solution). The average number of days to achieve this have fallen significantly over the last few years from 164 days on 2012/13 to 69 days in 2015/16. The recent performance between 01.04.16 and 17.06.16 indicates that the average number of days continues to gradually reduce and now is on an average of 67.5 days.

As reported already, the measures of the Libraries Service are currently collected and reported upon annually and there is a need to determine which are most useful and need to be collected more regularly - or of course develop new ones if required. It is envisaged that this work will be undertaken hand in hand with the work of remodelling the service between April and September 2016.

The Library Service has managed in 2015/16 to achieve 16 of the 18 core entitlements of the full Standards and have achieved two in part. It was not possible for the Service to achieve the rights that deal with support for users mainly due to the service's low staffing levels. I have reported on the staffing level to the Cabinet following a review of the service, and noted that the existing system was not sustainable and this was following consideration when drafting a new 'More than Books' Strategy for the Service.   Of the seven quality indicators that include targets, Gwynedd managed to achieve two in full and five in part. Despite, our achievements being very strong in the past, Gwynedd has failed some of the targets against the current standards framework, mainly and again, due to the service's staffing levels - it is not possible for the service to offer the range of support to users that are expected by the standards.

5.0 Financial Situation / Savings

My total efficiency savings and cuts plans for this year are equivalent to £490,138 and all the schemes have been realised apart from one scheme that extends to 2017/18. It is expected that the relevant section of this scheme (£12,000) will be achieved soon.

6.0   Recommendation

Accept and note the information in this report.

Views of the statutory officers

The Chief Executive:

It is good to see the activity in terms of trying to realise the promises of the Strategic Plan. In terms of resources for homeless people, I am aware of recent work by the Scrutiny Investigation noting the importance of ensuring an adequate and varied provision due to the possible increase in cases of people presenting themselves as homeless.

In terms of the Libraries Service, another important report is submitted to Cabinet regarding the future direction of the Service. The performance of Galw Gwynedd is a cause for concern and I understand that internal discussions are underway to see what can be done to remedy that situation.

The Monitoring Officer:

No comments from a propriety perspective.

The Head of Finance Department:

Nothing to add from a financial propriety perspective.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Performance Measures

Background Documents

None