
THE CABINET, TUESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2024

Present -

Councillors: Dyfrig Siencyn, Nia Jeffreys, Craig ab Iago, Dilwyn Morgan, Paul Rowlinson and Menna Trenholme.

Also present -

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Huw Dylan Owen (Statutory Director of Social Services), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Ffion Madog Evans (Assistant Head of Finance) and Sioned Mai Jones (Democracy Team Leader).

- Item 6: Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department) and Jessica Mullan (Project Manager).
- Item 8-9: Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Services), Gail Ann Warrington (Health, Safety and Well-being Manager) (Item 8) and Eurig Huw Williams (Human Resources Service Manager) (Item 9).
- Item 10: Gerwyn Jones (Assistant Head of Environment - Transport) and Ceri Hughes Thomas (Parking and Streetworks Manager).
- Item 11: Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department) and Bob Thomas (Planning Policy Team Leader).

1. APOLOGIES

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting as well as BBC reporters who were present in the Chamber.

Great sadness was expressed at the resignation of four Cabinet Members and the opportunity was taken to thank the four for their significant service and contribution to the work of the Cabinet over the years. Gratitude was expressed for the work of those Members stating that they would be sorely missed.

Apologies were received from Dewi Aeron Morgan (Head of Finance Department) 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

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2024 were accepted as a true record.

6. LLECHEN LÂN (A CLEAN SLATE) - OLDER PEOPLE'S SOCIAL SERVICES FOR THE FUTURE

The report was submitted by Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

DECISION

- To accept the results of the Llechen Lân (A Clean Slate) work - Social Services for Older People for the Future (Appendix 1).
- To adopt the strategic direction and action plan of Llechen Lân (Appendix 2).

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted expressing that the report was unique, comprehensive and setting the direction for older people's services into the future. It was stated that the report was revolutionary in its content. The opportunity was taken to thank Council staff who had worked on the report and this project which contained essentially important data and information.

It was noted that in June 2023 a task and finish group had been established to carry out research into key population trends that would affect older people's services over the next few years. It was reported that Llechen Lân's aim was to find out the actual cost of providing adult services this year in order to plan for the future. It was explained that the work had been sizeable and detailed and that information from various sources on a county, national and international level had been collected and analysed.

It was stated that the report concluded that the current situation of providing social care to older people in Gwynedd was neither sustainable nor viable. The fact that individuals were now living longer was highlighted as something to celebrate and provided further social and cultural benefit to communities.

The Statutory Director of Social Services detailed the contents of the report. He noted that work had been undertaken to examine the change seen in the county's demographics and the change in population in the 10 years between 2011 and 2021. He expressed that the report examined population projections, as far as 2042, and what influence this would have on Gwynedd. The anticipated financial pressures predicted in the report and the challenges facing the workforce were detailed.

The action plan and future work programme included in the report set out the things the Adults Department and Council were trying to do to mitigate the impact of population change.

The Head of Adults, Health and Well-being added that the challenges highlighted in the report were not something that was going to happen but rather something that was already happening. It was expressed that the contribution of other Departments such as Housing, Byw'n Iach and Economy and Community would be vital and that this matter was for the entire Council to provide input rather than just the Adults Department. To conclude, he noted that the first step was to identify findings and the main messages that needed to be conveyed and how to meet the challenges.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Gratitude was expressed for the report, agreeing that it was important to consider the long term. The Government was called to adequately fund the Council's services but it was recognised that this would not be sufficient if things continued as they were currently. The emphasis in the report on the preventative work to manage demand and ensure that County residents lived healthy lives was welcomed.
- The report's alarming findings were reflected upon such as that an additional £24 million would be needed without considering inflation, which was a total of £70 million, indicating that there would be less money but a need to deliver more services.
- It was expressed that the field of care needed to be prioritised and that the Council had a duty to use the available funds and resources as effectively as possible. The reference in the report to examine best practices in other Councils to compare and develop was welcomed.
- The opportunity was taken to say a huge thank you to the county's unpaid carers. It was believed that the roles of unpaid carers needed to be further highlighted and ask what could be done to support them.
 - In response, it was noted that the Council and the Adults Department were entirely dependent on unpaid carers in the community and that this contribution was vital to ensure the operation of social services. It was believed that 90% of the UK's care was being provided free of charge. It was noted that there was a need to ensure support and discounts for unpaid carers and that this matter was addressed in the medium-term action plan. It was noted that this element was developing but there was scope for further work on the needs of unpaid carers and discussions to be held with the carers.
 - It was noted that the report would be summarised and published in Barn magazine and Welsh Agenda shortly. It was hoped that the report's practical messages would be shared nationally and be a topic of conversation although it was believed that there was a wider political question regarding the financial support and funding needed for social services.
- It was highlighted that there was a focus on developments in the technology field in the report and it was asked whether more could be highlighted about the Welsh language element and the importance of the language in considering those developments.
 - The challenge of obtaining Welsh language services was recognised noting that various computer systems were used and reference was made to the term "Technology Enabled Care", namely technology that enabled people to live independently. It was noted that this was rarely available in Welsh. It was noted that the Council was pushing and promoting the language need adding that the Council was working with technology companies who were developing this type of service to make it available in Welsh. It was acknowledged that the Council was currently far from reaching the aim but it was stated with certainty that this must be part of the solution in future.
- It was believed that the report was an example of the Council at its best where there was an understanding of the problem, what were the solutions and action plan on how to solve the problem.

- Attention was drawn to the number of young people leaving the County and a request was made for individuals or families to return, noting that grants were available to help them.
- The Chief Executive noted that he took pride in this work and noted that it was a good example of forward planning. It was explained that the report highlighted serious problems and that these challenges were beyond the Council's ability to solve them. It was noted that delivery challenges were facing the Council next year due to the £15 million funding gap not to mention future challenges. It was believed that 22 reports such as these were needed across Wales to establish the National picture and then a National strategy to tackle the problems over the next twenty years. It was highlighted that the current system was not sustainable.

To conclude, the Cabinet Member noted that the report was an operational document and that the Care Academy was being launched on 13 November.

7. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GWYNEDD CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL 2023-2024

The report was submitted by Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive)

DECISION

To accept and note the information set out in the report that reports on the work of the Corporate Parent Panel for the year 2023-24.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted stating that it was a privilege to Chair the Corporate Parent Panel as it was one of the most important things achieved by the Council. Part 1.2 of the Report was quoted as summarising what the Council was trying to achieve in the field.

It was highlighted that many Cabinet Members, Heads of Department, Officers from the Children's Department and representatives from the Health Authority were members of the Panel and were examining the Council's work in supporting around 280 children in its care. Reference was made to the recent challenge of unaccompanied asylum seekers who were from different cultures and had often faced trauma, noting that 14 children who were asylum seekers were currently in the Council's care.

Attention was drawn to some points in the report which related to Small Group Homes, Education and Training opportunities for school staff. Reference was made to fields where the Council would like to make improvements such as carrying out health assessments on children coming into care in a more timely manner and trying to attract more people to become foster parents. The Fostering Offer was detailed, namely a support package for foster parents that was currently being developed to encourage more to become foster parents.

Lois Owens was thanked for her help in compiling the report as well as staff of the Children and Supporting Families Department who faced the challenges highlighted in the report on a daily basis in their jobs.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The opportunity was taken to pay tribute to fostering families and individuals noting the value of what they did, and the importance of supporting these individuals and families was highlighted.
- The importance of training in this field was emphasised, highlighting that it was essential for Members as well as Council staff to complete the training.
- Council staff were also thanked for their work and the Chief Executive was thanked for highlighting the Small Group Homes in his presentation as well as the Council's commitment to becoming a Trauma Informed Council as set out in point 4.1 of the report. Pride was taken in this commitment and it was agreed that it was a priority.
- It was asked for more details regarding part 2.3.2 of the report which referred to the use of unregistered placement arrangements (OWR).
 - In response, it was noted that occasionally no location registered with the CIW Inspectorate was available. In such situations, it was explained that the Council was required to create a placement that involved purchasing a house or renting a building and commissioning carers or providing Council carers to care for the child. Although the Council ensured that the placement was suitable and safe for the child, it was noted that it was not a registered placement. It was believed that there were only 2 cases now in Gwynedd.
 - It was added that the Small Group Homes Scheme was important in terms of ensuring adequate placements in the county that would be run by the Council and registered with CIW.
 - Reference was made to the Government's wider agenda to try to eliminate profits from the children's service. Support for this principle was expressed by the Leader asking if the outcome of this involved higher costs. The Statutory Director of Social Services noted that there would be higher costs in the short term to develop the services but that this agenda should not lead to higher costs in the long term. He added that everyone was in agreement that eliminating profits was a good thing but achieving this goal was a challenge.
- Reference was made to the discussions with the Government to improve the neuro-developmental service and a request was made for an update on these discussions.
 - It was reported that the neuro-developmental services and the autism service within the Council were collaborating with the Derwen service. It was acknowledged that Derwen's waiting lists were long which was unacceptable. It was noted that it was a challenge for the service working in partnership with the Health Board as well as a challenge for the Health Board. It was noted that discussions were being held with the Government and the Health Board about this and work was currently being undertaken to try to address the challenges.
 - It was reported that a survey of the integrated services would begin shortly to ensure that the services were suitable and that children in the County were receiving the service they needed.
- Work undertaken on a corporate parent level was recognised and the previous observation regarding the need for training and a way to share information about the responsibilities of a corporate parent was reiterated.
- Reference was made to the challenges faced by foster parents and that there was value in learning from the experiences of foster parents to get a better picture of these challenges. It was noted that an effort was underway to try to

attract a foster parent to be part of the Panel as well as a child who had been in the Council's care to come and speak to the Panel.

8. HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING ANNUAL REPORT

The report was submitted by Cllr Menna Trenholme

DECISION

To accept the report and approve the recommendations.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted highlighting that the impact of two years of Government guidance on COVID and the after-effect of this on staff well-being continued to have a significant impact on the Council's Health and Safety agenda. With services re-establishing themselves to the new normal, and staff going through a transition between working hybridly within the offices and at home, it was noted that Managers and Team Leaders would have to be supported when adapting to this step.

Attention was drawn to the main points of the report, which referred to accident figures, the service's work programme and occupational Health matters. The Head of Corporate Services added that it had been a time of moving to a different model of working. It was noted that recovery from the COVID period continued and there was further work to be done after following up on training courses. It was recognised that Council Managers were responding well to the requests for Health and Safety training and that it was encouraging that Council staff were taking health and safety issues seriously as it was one of the Council's main risks.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked how Cyngor Gwynedd compared to other Councils on health and safety matters and whether there was a procedure of measuring.
 - In response, the Head of Corporate Services noted that it was not customary to measure against other Councils. Instead, it was noted that the Council focused on what internal progress was being made. It was added that the Health and Safety team trained in other counties and was likely to be ahead in some fields but not in others. It was noted that this was mainly due to the varying nature and workforce of other Councils which meant that risks varied.
- It was reiterated that Health and Safety was the responsibility of the Council's entire workforce across all Departments as well as Council Members.
- Reference was made to the Incidents Reported to RIDDOR table asking why the amber category, namely 'Other', was the highest in 3 out of 5 years. It was asked whether or not further work was required to understand this.
 - In response, it was stated that HSE chose the categories and that the 'Other' category was numerous and included several different issues and incidents. It was noted that it was possible to show what had been reported and that the information was available.
- It was enquired whether lessons had been learnt following the incident that was reported to HSE as an accident where a service user had suffered a fall.

- In response, it was noted that HSE had visited the Residential Home in question and provided recommendations which were being followed up in a work programme across the Council.

9. ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT REPORT

The report was submitted by Cllr Menna Trenholme

DECISION

To approve the Annual Report for 2023/24.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted summarising the main activities in the field of employment within the Council during 2023/24. It was noted that the information in the report provided a general overview of the characteristics of the Council's workforce and commented on how that informed certain elements of the staffing strategy. It was highlighted that the report outlined some of the key issues in this area for 2024/25.

The Cabinet had been guided through the report highlighting sickness absence issues and the sickness absence analysis per category as well as the Workforce Planning project. The successes of the Apprenticeship and Graduate Trainee schemes were mentioned which attracted young workers to the Council's workforce. Reference was also made to the Hybrid working scheme and the Equality scheme.

The Human Resources Service Manager added that the report's figures covered the central Departments of the Council as well as the services where the Council was a host and the lead Authority such as GwE and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. It was noted that this influenced the statistics as a high number worked for these services.

The successes of the Apprenticeship and Graduate Trainees Schemes were reiterated noting that these Schemes were part of young people's conversations and that the Council's training opportunities were praised. They added that the schemes were open to people of all ages. It was noted that over 300 had applied this year for the two Schemes which was a particularly good figure. It was highlighted that efforts were also being made to support all Council staff, with secondments encouraged so that staff could receive different experiences and that a number of secondments had been offered to posts relating to priority projects within the Council Plan.

Observations arising from the discussion

- There was a wish to congratulate the service on the Apprenticeship Scheme, recognising the importance of the scheme to give the people of Gwynedd opportunities to work and train through the medium of Welsh.
- It was asked why there was no reference to the Women in Leadership project in the report and it was enquired whether it was possible to include a paragraph about this project in the report.
 - It was recognised that a reference to this project should be in the report as the project was an important one that addressed the split between men and women in Managerial positions in the Council. It was reported that the

- outcome of the project could be seen with 41% of Council Managers now female; it was noted that this figure was considerably lower five years ago.
- It was agreed to add a paragraph about the Women in Leadership project in the report.
 - It was questioned whether high staff turnover was a good or bad thing stating that high turnover could be seen in some Departments such as the Economy and Community Department. It was assumed that this was due to the nature of grants and challenges that related to this and it was asked whether there was cause for concern about these figures.
 - In response, it was noted that staff turnover was unpredictable from Department to Department, e.g. that staff turnover in the Corporate Services Department had been at its highest this year but at its lowest last year. It was agreed that the nature of employment in the Economy Department was a factor with jobs being funded by various grants and resulting in temporary or short-term contracts. It was believed that this influenced the situation of individuals and their decisions. It was proposed to discuss with the Economy Department to see what the Council could do to address the issue.
 - It was enquired whether Cyngor Gwynedd was the only Council offering Apprenticeship and Professional Trainee opportunities through the medium of Welsh.
 - It was believed that this was correct also noting that the Council externally influenced colleges and universities in terms of the courses offered in Welsh and promoted what the Council offered in colleges and universities.

10. PARKING SCHEME AND FEES

The report was submitted by Gerwyn Jones (Assistant Head of Environment – Transport)

DECISION

- 1.1 To approve and enable the Parking Service to proceed with the realisation of two savings schemes that had been approved by the Council's Cabinet in 2023/24, namely:
 - 1.1.1 Increase Penygwryd parking fees from £2.00 for half a day and £4.00 for a full day to £4.00 for 6 hours and £8.00 for 12 hours.
 - 1.1.2 Increase the price of an Annual Parking Permit from £140 to £145 per year and the price of a Local Parking Permit from £70 to £75 per year.
- 1.2 To approve and enable the Parking Service to proceed with realising two savings schemes that required further consideration before reaching a final decision in 2024/25, namely:
 - 1.2.1 Extend the enforcement hours of short-stay car parks from 10:00 until 16:30 to 9:00 until 17:00.
 - 1.2.2 Adjustment to Band 2 Long-stay Fees Structure in accordance with what is seen in Appendix A.
- 1.3 To agree on a 40% increase to all parking fees to enable the Parking Service to meet the income target that is creating a significant shortfall in the budgets.

- 1.4 It was noted that should the Cabinet Members decide to approve the savings schemes set out within 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, there will be a 10 day standstill period before the matter can be transferred to the Council's Legal Department in order to carry out a statutory consultation period in accordance with the Local Authority Traffic Orders Regulations.
- 1.5 It was noted that as part of the consultation period, there will be an essential requirement for the Council to advertise the proposed changes in the local newspapers as well as display the information (including the new fees) in a prominent position in the car parks that will be affected.
- 1.6 To confirm the intention to proceed with the preparations to implement all changes from 1 April 2025.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted by the Assistant Head of Environment - Transport which referred to the realisation of two savings schemes approved by the Cabinet to increase Penygwryd parking fees and increase the annual and local parking ticket price. An overview of the remaining recommendations was given to enable the Parking service to proceed to realising these schemes as well as new savings schemes for 2024/25.

Details were shared about some of the figures included in the report on the total additional income objective. The importance of continuing to look after local County residents was emphasised through things such as the season ticket which was very reasonable for the provision.

Reference was made to another recommendation in the report to increase all parking fees by 40% to enable the Parking service to meet an income target which created a significant budget shortfall. It was noted that background information had been included in the report as well as Appendices comparing the current fee structure with the proposed fee structure.

The Chief Executive added that inflation was currently out of control nationally and that this report was an attempt to catch up with the impact and that the financial position pushed the Council towards many of the decisions in the report. It was reiterated that this decision was not easy but there were no longer any easy decisions left and that increasing income in some areas must be looked at in order to protect and be able to continue to maintain services in others.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the decision sought in part 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 of the report were issues where these elements required consultation. He confirmed that there was no need to ask to consult on the rest of the recommendations.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Emphasis was placed on the logic behind these decisions which was the financial squeeze.
- The Department was asked to ensure that machines and signs were age-friendly when they were adapted as some could be difficult to understand.
- A desire was expressed to be open about the local levy on parking fees and what was available to communities as some of the money from the local car park came back to help with community initiatives.

- Pride was expressed that the fees were not being increased for disabled people.
- It was noted that the local parking ticket price increase had been kept as low as possible and had been increased by only 3% as a result of a previous request from Cabinet Members.

11. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-24

The report was presented by Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment)

DECISION

The Annual Monitoring Report 6 (Appendix 1) was accepted and it was agreed for it to be submitted to the Government by the end of October 2024.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted stating that it was a statutory request to monitor the Local Development Plan annually and to submit an Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Government by the end of October. It was noted that this would be the sixth Annual Monitoring Report relevant to the period between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

The Cabinet had been reminded that the collaboration arrangement with Anglesey County Council on Planning Policy matters had concluded on 31 March 2023 and that a new Planning Policy team had been established for Cyngor Gwynedd. It was noted that this report would only report on the evidence specific to Gwynedd. It was explained that the conclusions of the Annual Monitoring Report would form part of the evidence base that would contribute to the preparation of a new Local Development Plan for the Gwynedd Local Planning Authority area.

Details were provided about the Monitoring Framework as set out in the report and Plan and an overview of key indicators was provided. Attention was drawn to a few errors in the report, reference was made to:

- The table in point 3.1.2 of the report – 2 should have been noted against the white circle instead of 0.
- The table in point 3.1.5 of the report – 15 should have been noted in the last row, which was in grey, instead of 11.

It was added that these figures were correct in the Appendix.

Attention was drawn to part 3.1.6 of the report which provided an overview of the key conclusions as well as part 3.1.8 of the report which set out the overall views of the Planning Policy Working Group. To conclude, it was noted that the report was factual based on specific evidence and indicators, it was noted that the Working Group's comments had not resulted in any change to the content of the Annual Monitoring Report. Despite this, it was emphasised that the comments were important in terms of considerations in preparing the new Local Development Plan.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Gratitude was expressed to the Assistant Head of Environment Department about the report. It was enquired how many years were left on this Plan before the new Plan could be started. It was confirmed that there were two years left.

- An observation was made that this report was factual for the period up to March 2024 and that the comment by the Planning Policy Working Group about Article 4 was irrelevant to this report because it had come into force in September but it would be relevant for the new Local Development Plan.

12. REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25 - END OF AUGUST 2024 REVIEW

The report was submitted by Cllr Paul Rowlinson

DECISION

Noting that there were forecasts of £7.6 million of overspend by Council departments, to accept the report on the end of August 2024 review of the revenue budget, and support the steps the Chief Executive has introduced to address the significant overspend by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, the Children and Families Department, the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department and the Environment Department.

To approve the transfer of £1,868k of underspend on corporate budgets to the Council's Financial Strategy Reserve.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted stating that it detailed the latest review of the Council's revenue budget for 2024/25, and the projections towards the end of the financial year. It was noted that a summary of the final position of all departments had been included in Appendix 1 of the report.

Following the end of August review, it was reported that projections suggested there would be a £7.6 million overspend and that six of the departments would overspend by the end of the year. Significant overspend was anticipated by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, the Children and Supporting Families Department, the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department and Environment Department. It was emphasised that this was not a problem of overspending but mainly a problem of underfunding as the Government was not giving the Council enough resources. The main issues and areas with significant variance were detailed as set out in the report.

To conclude, it was noted that a Medium-term Financial Plan report had been submitted to the Cabinet on 14 May 2024, which outlined a savings and cuts system to respond to the financial situation. It was explained that this included recommending freezing expenditure during the year should it become apparent that substantial overspending was likely and that such a measure was deemed appropriate given the latest overspending projections. It was confirmed that there would have to be a combination of freezing expenditure along with making use of the Council's reserves to fund the anticipated financial deficit for 2024/25.

To conclude, it was noted that other Councils were doing the same type of things and that their projections were quite similar which reiterated the message that the Welsh Government must provide more funding to Local Authorities.

The Assistant Head of Finance added that this report had been submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee on 10 October and the comments received from the Committee were detailed such as:

- Concern about the overspending and the use of reserves.
- A desire to receive further information about the work commissioned by the Chief Executive; it was believed that it was crucial for findings of the work to be submitted to the Committee.
- Welcomed the steps to freeze expenditure during the year as an attempt to try to reduce the level of overspending.
- Accepted the recommendations and the statement that Gwynedd's situation was not unique.

The Chief Executive expressed his gratitude to the Cabinet Member for the report and reiterated that the areas under pressure were prevalent across the country's Councils. Reference was made to the work commissioned to better understand the budget deficit and overspend. It was noted that the work clearly demonstrated the increased demand on the Council's services. It was reiterated that the additional needs would have to be met even though there was no budget to meet them which lead to overspending. It was predicted that the Council would face a £14-18 million funding gap and unless the Council stopped providing a service the only other option was to raise Council tax significantly. It was noted that none of the options were easy.

It was noted that freezing expenditure already occurred, e.g. discretionary spending where the risks of not spending were low; that would be examined further during the year. However, it was noted that few discretionary budgets existed and any discretionary budgets had already been cut.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was believed that the Council had already cut and had already made savings of around £60 million over the last 10 years which was a huge cut.
- It was reiterated that not offering services was dangerous in terms of the well-being and health of Gwynedd residents.
- It was emphasised that the Westminster Government had been cutting budgets for Welsh Councils for the past 10 years and, as a result, Cyngor Gwynedd had been forced to make cuts. It was noted that cutting funding to Councils did not meet the problems being created in London.
- Reference was made to deliberate political decisions to cut public sector budgets expressing that the Government in London did not look after Wales.
- The good collaboration taking place with the Council's Finance Department was highlighted, noting that this was encouraging as well as the move to examine the budgetary situation on a corporate level and that there was good collaboration between Council Departments. It was noted that the lack of funds was leading to a feeling of unification within the Council which was something new.
- The Chief Executive explained that the Council had some reserves to deal with a short-term situation, e.g. £4 million of overspending this year, but there would be no contingency for dealing with the £14-18 million cash gap projected for next year.
- It was noted that the Welsh Government was planning provision for Councils that would fail to set a budget although there were no details on these plans. It was

believed that only advice would be given unless loans were offered which would lead to further financial gaps in the future.

- It was enquired what was the situation when a Council failed to set a budget. In response, the Monitoring Officer noted that the same statutory provision existed in England and Wales in terms of Section 114, namely a direct intervention through the Welsh Government that would have the same effect as administrators to a company.

13. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 – END OF AUGUST REVIEW

DECISION

- To accept the report on the end of August review (31 August 2024 position) of the capital programme.
- To approve the following revisions to the Capital Budget approved on 7 March 2024 in terms of the programme funding methods (as shown in part 3.2.3 of the report), namely:
 - an increase of £370,000 in the use of borrowing
 - an increase of £17,080,000 in the use of grants and contributions
 - a decrease of £51,000 in the use of the capital reserve
 - an increase of £1,260,000 in the use of renewal and other reserves.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted which highlighted a capital programme (end of August 2024 situation) and approved the relevant funding sources. The report was summarised which provided an analysis per Department of the £169.8 million capital programme for the 3 years between 2024/25 and 2026/27. Details were provided about sources to fund the net increase which was around £51.6 million since the original budget, with £33 million deriving from second profiling at the end of the previous year.

The main conclusion noted that specific plans were in place to invest £117 million in 2024/25 on capital schemes, with £48.8 million (42%) funded through specific grants. It was reported that an additional £17.2 million of proposed spending had been re-profiled from 2024/25 to 2025/26 and 2026/27 and the main plans that had slipped since the original budget, as identified in the report, were noted. In addition, the additional grants that the Council had managed to attract since the last review were listed.

Reference was made to the information about the Council's Capital Prudential Indicators highlighting that, in accordance with the Prudential Code by CIPFA, the information must be reported. It was reiterated that the Council had fully complied with a policy on lending for capital purposes.

It was noted that this report had been submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee on 10 October but there were no comments to report.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was enquired whether Government capital grants were now falling. In response, it was noted that capital allocation had remained at the same level for 15 years, despite inflation. It was noted that the grant culture continued to exist

and that the Council was still applying for grants. It was added that there would be an announcement on the budget in two weeks and there would be information at that time about the additional grants. It was noted that the message at the moment was that there was no more capital, and grant opportunities may be cut.

14. SAVINGS OVERVIEW: PROGRESS REPORT ON REALISING SAVINGS SCHEMES

DECISION

To accept the information in the report and note the progress made towards realising the savings schemes for 2024/25 and previous years.

DISCUSSION

The report which summarised the situation with the Council's savings was submitted. It was reported that in order to close the funding gap this year, it was necessary to implement £5.6 million worth of savings during 2024/25 which was a combination of £3.6 million that had previously been approved in February 2023, and new savings approved in February 2024 worth £2 million. It was noted that there were difficulties in realising savings in some areas, most prominently in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the field of waste. As a result, £2 million worth of schemes with significant delivery risks were scrapped during 2023/24.

It was noted that relevant savings to 2024/25 were noted in Appendix 1 and also in Appendix 2 with Appendix 1 showing historical savings plans for the period from the 2015/16 financial year to the 2024/25 financial year. It was added that Appendix 2 showed the new £12 million savings plans and that 65% of the savings had already been realised and a further 8% were on track to deliver on time. It was expressed that there were risks to realise the savings in some areas with the main ones being the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Environment Department.

To conclude, it was noted that Appendix 3 set out the value of the savings already approved for 2025/26 onwards. It was expressed that further savings and cuts schemes for 2025/26 were already under consideration by the Council and would soon be the subject of a report. It was confirmed that £41.7 million of savings had been realised which was 90% of the required £46.6 million over the period. It was anticipated that a further 2% would be realised by the end of the financial year but there was a delay and some risks to delivering the remaining plans.

The Assistant Head of Finance added that this report had been submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee on 10 October and the comments received from the Committee were detailed such as:

- Welcomed that 90% of savings since April 2015 had been achieved, which were worth £41.7 million, but were concerned about the £4 million amount of savings that would not be achieved this year and therefore add to the financial pressure.
- Noted that there were £557,000 worth of historical savings that remained undelivered in Appendix 1. The Committee was eager for the current picture to be separated from the historical situation so that risks to the current situation could be identified.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was stated that the amounts of savings that had been achieved were very high. It was noted that they were actually cuts, not savings. It was believed that there was room for gratitude for what the Departments had achieved so far while striving to maintain services.

15. EXEMPT ITEM

It was resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following item due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - Information about the financial or business transactions of any specific person (including the authority that retains that information).

There was an acknowledged public interest in being open about the use of public resources and related financial issues. However, it was also acknowledged that there were occasions, in order to protect public financial interests, where commercial information must be discussed without being publicised. The report deals specifically with financial and business matters and related discussions. Publication of such commercially sensitive information could adversely affect the interests of the tenderers and the Council. This would be contrary to the wider public interest of securing the best overall outcome. For these reasons, I am satisfied that the matter was closed despite the public interest.

16. THE COSTS OF A NEW SOCIAL CARE SYSTEM (WCCIS)

DECISION

- Financial authority was granted to proceed on the basis of the business case to purchase a new Social Services data system jointly with the North Wales Region Cluster.
- For delivering (a), the financial applications process for 2025/26 was assumed for one-off funding followed by annual revenue funding from 2026 onwards.

DISCUSSION

The report was discussed.

The meeting commenced at 1:00pm and concluded at 4:00pm.

CHAIR