

## CYNGOR GWYNEDD - Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

<b>Title of Item:</b>	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Menna Trenholme
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Ian Jones, Head of Corporate Support Department
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	20 February 2024

### 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 been happening in the fields within my remit as Cabinet Member for the Corporate Support 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 would like to remind you that all the issues have already been discussed and scrutinised by me at a meeting of the Corporate Support Department Management Team on 17 January 2024.

**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 Support Department is leading on six projects within various priority areas in 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** Training and awareness raising of social value arrangements have taken place during the pilot phase of the regime. Further work will be undertaken to raise awareness of wider officers who procure in due course.

- 4.1.3** Workshops for local businesses are held (regarding social value arrangements). Work is ongoing to try and guide local businesses through the regime as a specific agreement arises and national support that is available will also be taken advantage of. The food agreement tender period is currently open, from November 2023 to April 2024.
- 4.1.4** Guidelines are in place for the new arrangements developed as part of the pilot. A data collection system will be required following the termination of the agreement to use the portal of consultancy firm Social Value Portal.
- 4.1.5** Work is underway to review procurement policies to include the social measures but it is also necessary to reflect the wider changes to come with the series of new national regulations during the year. Modifications to the Procurement Policy are due to be completed by the end of the financial year. Preparations for the changes in regulations have begun. These developments will be shared with the Corporate Governance Group and an awareness raising session has also been held for the category and procurement teams, field leaders and YGC.
- 4.1.6** Following a meeting with all category management and procurement teams it was agreed to hold additional performance challenge meetings for reporting on the results of reviewing contracts. Two meetings will be held during the year.

## **4.2 Women in Leadership**

- 4.2.1** The aim of this project is to increase the number of women who apply for and attain 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** The fourth series of the Developmental Programme has been running for the past two months and has now come to an end. Over 40 women have now followed the Programme, and analytical work on the first 3 cohorts shows that 33% of attendees have accepted a senior position since completing the Programme.
- 4.2.3** Another series of 'Sgwrs dros Baned/Discussions over a Cuppa' has come to an end. There have been some very entertaining discussions in this series again, including Ffion Johnstone and Elin Gwynedd from the Health Board, and Sian Pugh who is a new Assistant Head within the Council. The sessions had wide and very different audiences. While quite a few Managers and Assistant Heads had joined for the conversation with Ffion and Elin, a number of young and enthusiastic officers had joined to hear Sian's talk. Data shows that around 60 individuals later watched these sessions using a link on the intranet.
- 4.2.4** Arrangements are underway for a "Trwy Lygaid Merch/Through the Eyes of Women" event to be held on International Women's Day on 8 March 2024. This will be an event for Managers and Team Leaders, whether male or female which will also tie into the staff well-being programme. The aim is to raise awareness of the recognised challenges women face in the workplace, whether that be practical caring arrangements and work-life balance, lack of confidence or health conditions such as menopause.
- 4.2.5** The project board agreed to run a pilot relating to avoiding unconscious bias and ensuring equality in the appointment process, namely the introduction of anonymous application forms. The pilot will be conducted with Team Leader level positions and above across the organisation. Modifications have been made by the IT Service to the recruitment and appointment system within the staff self-service site to enable the anonymous application

forms pilot to be run. The modifications mean that the pilot can happen smoothly and that additional work will not arise for Managers individually or for the Support Service. A message has been shared and all Heads of Department to inform them about the pilot. A feedback form has also been created so that quantitative and qualitative feedback about the impact of the pilot can be collected.

- 4.2.6** Further work has taken place, and continues to take place on the statistics. It is intended that this data can inform the work of this project going forward. While there is more detailed analytical work to be done on the statistics that have been presented, on the face of it, the statistics show that there has been movement since the project was established, and that 41% of management level positions (Service Manager or above) are now held by women, compared to a figure of 30% when the project was established.
- 4.2.7** An Information Pack for the project has been placed on the Project Intranet pages and conversations have been arranged with Heads of Department to discuss the statistics of their individual Departments and how best to share the information pack within their Department.

### **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.
- 4.3.2** Work on organising training has been ongoing, and it is hoped to offer LGBTQ+ and British Sign Language sessions to frontline staff, with priority initially for those services who have already made a specific request for support. This is work earmarked for the end of the financial year, but it is expected that the theme will also run into next year. Discussions are underway to offer Transgender Awareness training organised by the Community Cohesion Service. Additional sessions of Your Responsibility for Equality have been offered to Members which have not yet been held, these will take place in February. The Equality Advisor has been on the new pilot of WLGA's anti-racism course.
- 4.3.3** The Equality Impact Assessment, Socio-Economic Duty and Welsh electronic form has been piloted by the language and equality officers. The IT Service is currently making improvements as a result. Further work will be needed before it is ready for further piloting.
- 4.3.4** Work on seeking level 2 certification of the Disability Confident scheme has been delayed recently. Work has now resumed and currently it is planned for it to be completed by the end of March 2024. Should there be any further slippage, then the work would be incorporated into the new Equality Plan for 2024/28.
- 4.3.5** An outline of an action plan, in response to the Inclusive Employers company review, has been developed. An outline of actions is set out in a consultation document on equality objectives 2024 – 28.
- 4.3.6** Work continues to ensure that more members of staff complete the equality questionnaire and there will be an attempt to target specific groups of staff over the coming period.

#### **4.4 Workforce Planning**

- 4.4.1** The work of identifying gaps and acting pro-actively is a priority that has highlighted itself more than ever recently and there is a need to respond to the staffing challenges faced by many services across the Council. A bespoke work programme and milestones have been formulated to identify short, medium and long-term gaps. Work is underway to establish detailed programmes of work for a programme of up to seven sub-projects contributing to the full project.
- 4.4.2** An exercise was recently undertaken with a Service in the Environment Department to pilot workforce planning. There are plans to expand the exercise on workforce planning practices to other services and departments as soon as possible.
- 4.4.3** 26 apprentices and 15 professional trainees are currently being supported. 14 new apprentices have also been appointed. Recruitment for apprentices and trainees for 2024/25 has already begun.
- 4.4.4** Over the past few weeks, a number of pupil engagement events have been held in Schools, including Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle, y Moelwyn and Brynrefail. Staff have also attended a number of external events including job fairs and information panels to promote careers at the Council.
- 4.2.5** A new careers website has been launched as part of the work to develop the Council's image as an employer. The overall feedback has been good for the development and further opportunities to develop the content have been identified.
- 4.2.6** Further consideration needs to be given to the potential timetable for developing a work experience plan and also on how further education institutions can be influenced to develop the Welsh language provision available for apprentices and trainees.

#### **4.5 Promoting use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd**

- 4.5.1** We will carry out specific projects 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** The Gwynedd Language Strategy 2023-2033 was adopted by the full Council on 7 December 2023, and an initial work programme was created. Meetings will be held in 2024 with all heads to consult on the content of the new language strategy work programme.
- 4.5.3** The entire Prosiect 15 budget has now been spent with a significant proportion of it having gone on employing an assistant project officer to produce original Welsh language content for social media. During the period in question a video was published by a medical student originally from Abersoch who talked about her story and material was also produced to accompany the *Defnyddia Dy Gymraeg* campaign by the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office. A successful session was held with young people at Llanrug Community Youth Club to create a Welsh language Christmas-themed video which received a positive response.
- 4.5.4** Work to populate Cyngor Gwynedd's place name map continues with workshops held in 4 primary schools during November and December namely Pennal, Corris, Garndolbenmaen and Borth y Gest. The workshops discussed the origins of place names and the importance of

respecting and protecting them as well as giving a practical session on how to populate the place names map. More workshops will be held in the new year.

Further research on changing street names in two pilot areas has led to a number of complications which make it not feasible to go ahead with this aspect at this time. As a result of this it was decided to focus on the sign installation scheme on settlements, bridges and district boundaries and increase the visibility of the project. It is hoped to install commote signs on 'A' roads as well as Welsh signs in Dyffryn Ogwen, Pistyll, Trefor and Caernarfon before the end of March.

Following lobbying by Cyngor Gwynedd officers, the Welsh Government has now changed a law and given local authorities powers to approve requests for Welsh-only "Welcome to town" signs from Town Councils. We are very proud of this success and will be engaging with town councils in the new year to inform them of this.

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

**4.6.1** The project looks at the strategic management of health and safety within the Council and how that ties into overall governance and performance systems. It entails undertaking a full review of the management system in its entirety.

**4.6.2** One of the work-streams is the upgrading of the Health and Safety IT system. Following going out to market for a corporate health and safety software system, we decided to ask the IT service to create an internal system. This was mainly due to limitations and obstacles in the communication between external and other internal Council systems. Significant mapping has taken place on the needs of the Service, and the IT service will start the development of an internal system with a view to piloting and consulting with the Corporate Forum on the needs of the Departments/Services of the system.

**4.6.3** A review of the health and safety training of managers/team leaders has now been logged and is being shared with departments. Additional renewal courses up to December 2024 have been scheduled in line with the needs identified from the review. A template to reflect what needs to be done in practice to meet the standards of the IOSH model has been created, so that departments can move towards the integrated model.

**4.6.4** Work is being undertaken to review the work programme of a health, safety and well-being project so that the priorities align with the models template. Meetings will be held with each Head of Department to discuss the models, what is expected from their department, and what needs to be completed by the Health, Safety and Well-being Service. A report will be prepared to the Corporate Management Team outlining the project's work programme.

## **5. Performance**

**5.1** I note below an overview of the Department's performance during the financial year to date. Not all services are referred to, but I am keen to confirm that I am satisfied with the current performance of those services not referred to here.

## **5.2 Support**

**5.2.1** The Support Service undertakes the advertising of vacancies in the Council and reports on the average number of days taken to appoint to a post from the date of advertisement. In

December, 56 jobs were advertised for the first time and 9 jobs were re-advertised. The number of jobs being re-advertised has dropped to an average of 4 adverts per month since January 2022

**5.2.2** The Support Service measures the number of days from submitting an application to receiving the result of a 'DBS' check. In December the Support Service submitted 148 applications to the DBS. The DBS processed 75%. Performance reports from the DBS system have been sent to the Departments which take a high number of days to complete applications.

**5.2.3** Work has been undertaken to develop the ability for candidates to be able to submit feedback about the experience of completing a job application form with the Council within the jobs system. This development has been running for three months and feedback has been received from 502 candidates which is around 60% of the number who have applied for a job on-line with the Council. 96% were completely happy with 98% giving a score of 4 or more. Work is being done to look at the comments of the 4% to find out if there are further improvements that can be introduced to the system.

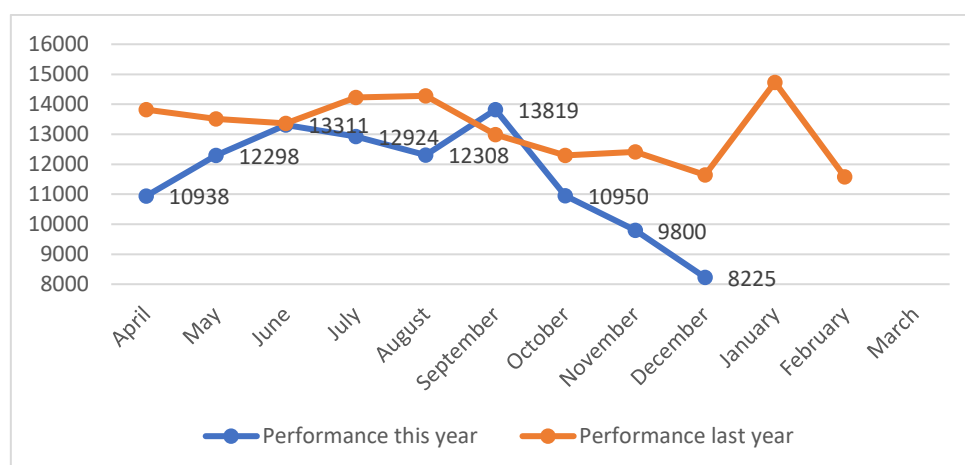
**5.2.4** In November and December, the Support Service ran 'Staff Self-Service' workshops for new staff and staff who have moved roles. The sessions raised staff's awareness of the self-service provision available for them and give them the opportunity to learn how to use it and promote its use among their services and departments.

**5.3 Customer Contact and Registration**

**5.3.1** Over the past few years the Customer Contact and Registration Service has coped extremely well under difficult circumstances, and steps have been taken to strengthen the service's capacity.

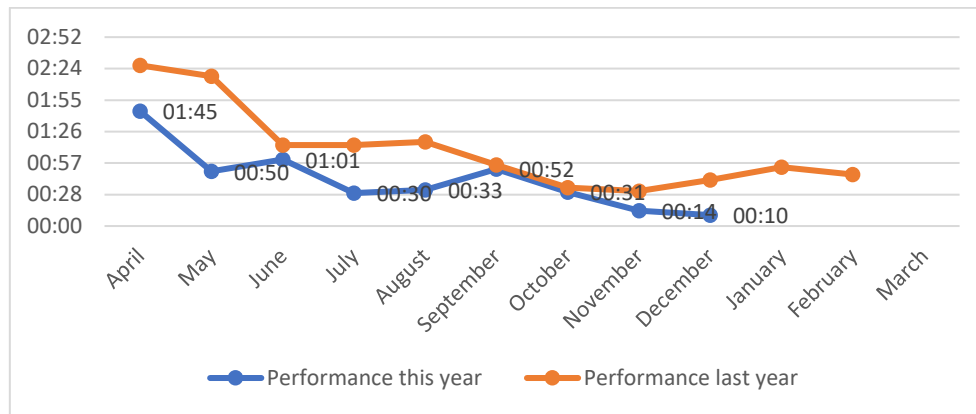
**5.3.2** In terms of the number of calls answered monthly, the number of November and December calls is significantly lower than the same period last year. Garden waste orders usually open in November. Garden waste orders this year did not open until January so this is contributing to the lower level of calls coming in during November and December. In addition, customers also did not have to make an appointment to go to our recycling centres over Christmas, so this led to a reduction in the type of calls being received.

*Number of Calls answered (monthly):*



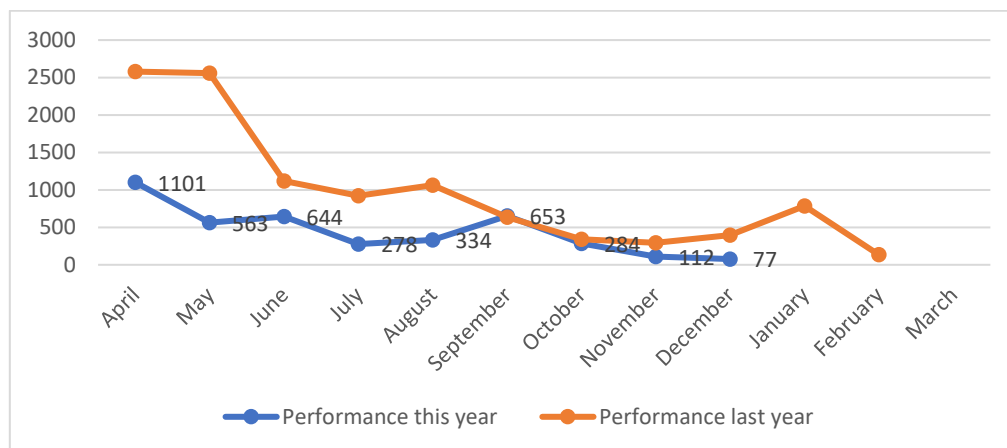
**5.3.3** As fewer calls were received to the Contact Centre during November and December staff were available to answer calls more quickly, and fewer people had to queue before receiving an answer. Although new staff were recruited into the service in October, the use of casual staff has given the service the ability to train new team members more quickly.

*Contact Centre average calls answered (monthly):*



**5.3.4** There was also a reduction in missed calls over November and December, that was due to more staff being available to answer phone calls.

*Number of missed calls (monthly):*



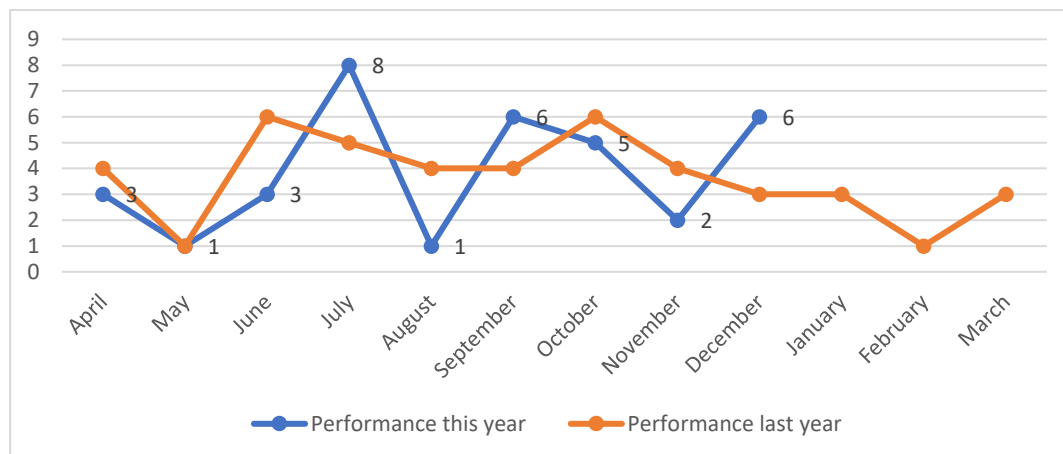
**5.3.5** With fewer calls coming into the Contact Centre and new staff appointed and trained there was an opportunity to monitor the live chat and use of 'webchat'. Turning on the 'live' chat on the webchat shows that there is customer demand for this type of medium and the intention over the coming period is to make greater use of this technology.

## 5.4 Research and Information

**5.4.1** Incidents where personal information is disclosed in error, or inadvertently, continue to occur in places within the Council. The numbers vary widely every month, with the total over the whole year remaining marginally lower than last year (35 between April - December this year, compared to 37 in the same period last year). Around half of recent cases continue to involve emails sent to the wrong recipient, and following a discussion at the Information Governance

Panel in November we are trialling turning off "Autocomplete" in the email system for some staff, then assessing the extent to which this makes mistakes less likely, and its impact on work effectiveness.

*Number of information incidents:*



**5.4.2** The Research and Information Service monitors and reports regularly on the percentage of freedom of information requests that were responded to within 20 working days. Performance is slightly better than last year but continues to cause some concern and the service is negotiating with some teams where there is a high volume of applications, and slow replies, which is taking the Council's performance down. This field is also addressed in the Information Workshops currently being provided for each Department's managers and team leaders. Statistics are shared by Department/Service with Heads.

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

**6.1** The Revenue Budget 2023/24 – End of November 2023 Review report was presented to Cabinet on 23 January, where the Department is forecast to overspend by around £22,000 by the end of the financial year.

**6.2** There is a combination of reasons for this likely overspend, such as increased pressure on a particular budget e.g. counselling and several services not reaching their income targets.

**6.3** The Department's total savings schemes for 2023-24 is £275,250, with these savings already fully realised or on track to be achieved in a timely manner.

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

### **7.1 Chief Finance Officer**

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

### **7.2 Monitoring Officer**

No observations to add in relation to propriety.