

THE CABINET 12/03/24

Present-

Councillors: Nia Jeffreys, Berwyn Parry Jones, Craig ab Iago, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Elin Walker Jones and Ioan Thomas.

Also present-

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Nia Grisdale (Legal Services Manager), Dewi Aeron Morgan (Head of Finance Department) and Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader).

- Item 6: Eurig Williams (Human Resources Advisory Services Manager), Delyth Williams (Equality Advisor) and Gwenno Mair Griffiths (Equality and Diversity Trainee)
- Item 8: Ffion Madog Evans (Assistant Head - Finance Department)
- Item 9: Carys Fôn Williams (Head of Housing and Property Department) and Lowri Cadwaladr Roberts (Assistant Head of Housing and Property Department).

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.

An apology was received from Councillors Dyfrig Siencyn, Beca Brown and Menna Trenholme.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2024 were accepted as a true record.

6. STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-28

The report was submitted by Cllr. Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

The Strategic Equality Plan was accepted and adopted for it to be implemented over the next four years.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, and the Cabinet Member was thanked for her guidance in the field. It was explained that it was a statutory requirement to create an Equality Plan through the Equality Act (Wales) 2010, and it was added that updating objectives was a part of this requirement. It was expressed that two public consultations had been held when creating an Equality Plan and it had been discussed at a Scrutiny Committee. It was explained that after receiving observations in the public consultations that amendments had been made to the objectives and to the plan to make it much easier to read.

It was emphasised that equality was vital to the Council as there was no way to maintain services without ensuring fairness for all.

The Equality Advisor added that engagement had ensured that the plan was suitable for the people of Gwynedd. It was expressed that the Plan reflected the needs of the people of the County and attention was drawn to the 5 objectives, namely employment, information - i.e., data about people with protected characteristics, the Council's internal arrangements, Services - i.e. ensuring equality within everyday work, and improving equality within the education field. It was explained that these 5 objectives were at the root of the Equality Plan.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- The plan was welcomed by noting pride that further education had been included as one of the 5 objectives. It was added that highlighting the true emotional and financial cost of attending school for the children of Gwynedd was vital. It was noted that the support of teachers to encourage children to the school was needed.
- It was noted that there was a tendency to think that plans of this kind were created and left on the shelf but that the steps noted in the report highlighted that this was not true about this report. It was noted that although the role of the service was to lead on this work, it was highlighted that equality was vital for everyone within the Council. It was emphasised that the work plan was created cross-departmentally over the first year before moving forward to implement the objectives following this.
- It was noted that this Plan set the right direction and set definitive guidance for the Council.

7. FUNDING FOR CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCY PLAN PROJECTS

The report was submitted by Cllr Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

- 1) It was approved to prioritise £1,640,495 from the climate fund for the following projects:
 - a) Green Fleet Plan - £1,048,400
 - b) Lighting Upgrading Pilot Scheme - £416,617
 - c) Heat Pumps Scheme - £175,478

- 2) To delegate the right to prioritise the remaining expenditure of the climate plan fund to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Members of the Climate and Nature Board.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted by the Chief Executive by noting that this report requested to fund Climate and Nature Emergency Plan projects. It had been noted back in November 2022 that the Cabinet had agreed to use funding from the general fund to finance an investment plan in solar panels with the revenue savings contributing towards the Council's savings scheme.

It was noted that this bid would fund 3 substantial specific projects. The first was the Green Fleet Plan. It was noted that in January 2023, the Cabinet had adopted a Green Fleet plan with the aim of providing a safe, effective, and zero-emission fleet for the Council's services. It was noted that 67 diesel and petrol vehicles were reaching the end of their life during 2023/24 and 2024/25 therefore in accordance with the Green Fleet Plan they would be replaced with electric vehicles.

The second scheme was the Lighting Upgrading Pilot Scheme. It was noted that changing lights in most of the Council's buildings required a significant investment and would take years to be completed. It was highlighted that street lighting upgrades had been carried out over recent years and adapting it reduced carbon emissions. It was explained that the aim was to carry out a pilot of six different buildings before deciding whether to proceed to expand it across the Council.

The third scheme was to place heat pumps, by following the same principle of running a pilot scheme. The Council had succeeded to receive a grant to install heat pumps at three sites in Gwynedd. To claim the grant, there was a need to invest 10% in match funding. It was noted that it was an opportunity to trial a low carbon heating method and learn lessons prior to considering upgrading the rest of the buildings.

It was noted that other opportunities were highlighted in the report, and it was noted that the decision asked to delegate the right to prioritise the expenditure to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Members of the Climate and Nature Board.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Support was noted for the plan, but it was noted that following funding these plans, there would be slightly over £1m left, but it was asked what would happen after all the money would be spent. It was noted that £3m was put in the Climate Fund since 2022, but it was explained that because of additional grants that nearly £8m had been spent. Following spending the £3m from the fund, the Cabinet needed to make a decision in terms of prioritising expenditure within the Council.
- Concern was raised about the complete shift to electric vehicles. It was noted that there may be a need for smaller steps and maybe hybrid vehicles for the countryside. It was emphasised that there would be time for staff to get used to the vehicles and to raise their confidence.
- It was asked if there were enough charging points available for the electric vehicles as many had been installed but had not been switched on. It was noted that there was an understanding that these points were being switched on in the coming months.
- It was expressed that these plans were practical and highlighted the Council's successes in receiving grants. The staff were thanked for their work, as well as the Climate Change Board who worked cross-departmentally.

8. ONE-OFF BIDS/TRANSFORMATION FUND 2024/25

The report was submitted by Cllr Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

To approve the one-off bids of £6,508,260 for 2024/25 to be financed from the Transformation fund and the Financial Strategy fund.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Council had set the budget last week. It was explained that the bids for one-off resources were being submitted separately to the Budget report as the allocation of a one-off resource did not impact on setting our annual revenue budget and was not a consideration when setting the Council Tax rate. It was noted annually that departments submitted bids for one-off resources for matters such as coping with temporary pressure, delivering the Council's Plan projects, transforming services or experimenting. It was explained this year that most of the bids were for coping with additional pressure on services, in the hope that the money would reduce the overspending within departments.

Nevertheless, it was highlighted that there were new schemes as well, such as continuing with the Apprenticeship Scheme and the Graduate Schemes, which was a very successful scheme and assisted with staff recruitment. It was highlighted that it would be possible to extend the Council's Tidying Teams scheme as well as re-starting additional street cleaners' jobs in urban areas.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Support was noted for these one-off bids, but concern was highlighted about the financial situation with many funds being emptied, and with the situation as it was. It was highlighted that more use of funds was needed.
- The work of the apprenticeship scheme and the graduate scheme was highlighted by noting that there was a bid to establish an adult and children care academy a part of the scheme as well as to look specifically on the challenges that face appointing in the health and care field.

9. PURCHASE OF CROWN OFFICES, PENRALLT, CAERNARFON

The report was submitted by Cllr Craig ab Iago

DECISION

The Cabinet authorised the purchase of the Crown Offices in Penrallt, Caernarfon, in accordance with terms and conditions to be determined by the Head of Housing and Property Department.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that one of the main concerns of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property was high figures of homelessness. It was emphasised that there was a significant increase since covid, as a result of the Westminster Government's policies coupled with the economic situation. It was noted that there was a need to respond to these numbers and this application to change the use of an existing building. It was noted that the department had visited a similar location in York, where they had responded to the need. It was noted that the available space would be vital to deal with homelessness, and it was confirmed that funding for this scheme would not take away from other schemes seen across the county.

The Head of Department added that this was an application to buy offices and to re-purpose them for individuals and families who needed emergency accommodation. It was explained that 250 households were currently in unsuitable locations in Gwynedd and this scheme would accommodate 100-120 people. It was noted that the purchase was also an opportunity to have a supportive hub at the building.

It was reiterated that the building was in a very good condition with only minor defects. It was emphasised that the purchase would enable the department to implement one of the main fields in the housing action plan.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- The plan was welcomed by emphasising the need to highlight that it would not happen overnight, and it would not impair on any other schemes. The element in terms of a hub to ensure support that would support the residents of Gwynedd was welcomed. The need to develop

units for various people by looking at the needs of residents in addition was emphasised.

- It was noted that supporting this scheme would also give revenue savings to the Council in addition as there would be no need to pay for temporary accommodation. It was also noted that there would be a social value to the scheme not only financial.
- It was expressed that with an expenditure of £6m on homelessness, it was vital to move forward.
- It was highlighted that temporary accommodation was unsuitable with many accommodations without a kitchen to cook and that could have a huge impact on people's diet, and it was asked what support was available. It was explained that the Hub was an opportunity to give multi-agency and cross-departmental support to ensure support for individuals and families' needs. It was expressed that it would be a central location for anyone to get housing support with the hope that it would detract from departments and agencies to ensure that people would maintain tenancies.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.00 pm

CHAIRMAN