

Meeting	Chief Officer Appointment Committee
Date	5 July 2012
Title	Post of Head of Housing and Social Services
Purpose	To consider the options for recruitment
Author	Chief Executive – Harry Thomas
Portfolio Leader	Council Leader – Councillor Dyfed Edwards

1. **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The head of service post for social services (also known as the statutory director for social services) has become vacant with the present incumbent having secured a post with a neighbouring authority.
- 1.2 As the Head of the Paid Service, I have a statutory role to advise the Council as to how it should deal with the vacancy. This is a very important post; not only because of the size and complexity of the service but also because its very nature captures the essence of public service, to help the most needy in society.
- 1.3 When considering the options for dealing with the vacancy, the Council needs to strike a balance. On the one hand we need to be mindful of the risk and instability that can arise from losing an experienced and capable officer, and therefore should be mindful that delaying decisions can have consequences. On the other hand, it also presents an opportunity to think strategically about the type of service and leadership we need in order to deal with the challenges and opportunities this service, and therefore the Council, will face in the coming years.
- 1.4 In coming to my recommendations, I have considered observations from key individuals at a:
 - national level
 - regional level
 - local level

I will expand on the nature of these observations at the meeting.

2. **STRATEGIC DRIVERS**

2.1 **Key Strengths of the Service**

The service has moved on considerably since the disappointing joint review in 2007. We know from independent reports that we have a caring, safe service that has achieved considerable improvement across a range of services over the past few years. These strengths are reinforced by a very conscientious and committed workforce – right through from home carers to senior managers.

2.2 Areas for Improvement

Although there has been considerable improvement in the business skills of the department (commissioning, information management and systems) this is still a challenging area. The department's skills and experience in terms of change management (like the rest of the Council) is also still evolving and the effective de-commissioning of old services and commissioning of new services needs to improve further. The consequence of not being strong in these areas is that we do not as a Council deliver good value for money in social care. Last year we spent almost £7m more than the median of the family of eight rural authorities.

2.3 The National Context

There are three main drivers at the national level. Firstly, the recently published Social Services (Wales) Bill advocates new categories of need and also emphasises the need for more integrated working particularly in relation to the NHS. Secondly, the present national funding arrangements for social care are totally unsustainable – the LGA has recently published research that predicts the cost of adult social care will increase, on average, by 5% per annum above inflation for twenty years due to demographic pressures. Thirdly, the overall financial context. The Council has had to make savings for the past seven consecutive years and can safely expect to have to repeat this feat over the next seven years.

3. **OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COUNCIL**

3.1 External

The Council can either partner with another Council or advertise externally to fill the post.

3.2 Internal

The Council could appoint one of the corporate directors to the statutory post and create a head of service post without the statutory responsibilities. Alternatively, it can advertise the post internally without any changes to the present post, or it can take advantage of the vacancy in order to restructure services to create a new department.

4. **ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS**

4.1 External

I have discussed this option with the leadership of our two neighbouring authorities in the North West and both, for various reasons, think that such an approach would be high-risk at this point in time. Given Gwynedd's change agenda and challenges, I also consider it would be high-risk from our viewpoint. This does not preclude exploring potential collaboration in specific areas of social care but would exclude a joint post at the statutory level.

4.2 The option of advertising the post externally may appear appealing on first consideration however, should only be considered if there are reasons to believe that it would be successful. I have tried to gather intelligence at a national, regional and local level regarding the state of the market. I have also reviewed the circumstances behind the recruitment of the three most recent statutory director posts to be filled in Wales (all in the last 3 or 4 months). I will share the findings of this intelligence with members at the meeting. My conclusion, having considered all the facts, and having sought the opinion of key personnel, is that an external advert is highly unlikely to attract an effective response.

4.3 Internal

In considering the first option of appointing one of the current corporate directors as the statutory officer for social services, one needs to consider how the senior management structure works in Gwynedd as compared to other authorities. There is no fixed pattern as to how the statutory officer function is exercised in Wales. Some authorities have split children and adult services into different departments. In North Wales, half of the authorities establish the post at corporate director level and half at head of service level. Gwynedd also changed the way the corporate director function is exercised as part of the £1m savings exercise – they no longer head directorates and have no direct line management functions.

4.4 On balance, I see no compelling reason to change these arrangements. The core responsibilities of the statutory post are presented at Appendix 1. What is important is that the statutory officer has the necessary influence to exercise these responsibilities. In Gwynedd this requirement is exercised through a series of protocols, membership of the Corporate Leadership Team and direct reporting to the Chief Executive.

4.5 This leaves the option of an appointment at head of service level. Given the strategic drivers referred to in paragraph 2, I believe it is timely also to restructure in order to achieve more efficiencies and better change management by integrating the present Social Services Department with aspects of the present Provider and Leisure Department. The current social care functions on the provider side are the obvious functions with synergy. However, given the importance of the preventative agenda in the future, I also think that, given a creative approach, synergies in the leisure service could also be realised if included in the new department. The residual function from the Provider and Leisure Department – cleaning and catering – could be reallocated to client departments e.g. catering to the Education Department. Consideration can also be given to the future location of the housing service within the Council. I will expand on the reason for this recommendation at the meeting.

4.6 Integrating services internally is not the only opportunity to realise efficiencies and improve user experiences – greater external integration with health also offers opportunities. Gwynedd has already embarked on this journey but some authorities in Wales have already gone further. Also members should note that the new Social Services (Wales) Bill proposes to introduce powers to strengthen the internal and external integration of social care services mentioned above, in order to make better use of the capacity that already exists across the public sector in Wales. I will report further on this aspect at the meeting.

5. **COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS**

5.1 In my opinion the core skills and competencies required for the post should reflect the main challenges and opportunities faced by the service in coming years (as reflected in the strategic drivers in paragraph 2). The successful candidate will therefore need to demonstrate enterprise and innovation, effective change management and leadership skills and strong customer focus. I consider that these are the essential job requirements.

5.2 A more traditional approach would demand that professional qualifications in social care should also be an essential requirement. However, I believe that there are different skills priorities at different levels in an organisation. This view is :-

- endorsed by Skills for Care (See Appendix 2)
- endorsed by the three independent social services consultants who have worked with the authority in the past 18 months
- reflected in the fact that many of the statutory directors in Wales are not former social workers.

5.3 However, whilst I consider that professional qualifications should be desirable rather than essential, I think they should be a consideration in the appointment process. Therefore, should the successful candidate not have professional qualifications there should be a requirement to compensate for this through development activities such as peer support and mentoring.

5.4 The job description is attached at Appendix 3.

6. **TIMETABLE**

6.1 Should the Committee accept the recommendations in this report, I recommend the following timetable. In order to expedite matters, I recommend that the Committee agree to a reduced number of committee members being responsible for the short-listing i.e. a sub-committee of 3 or 5 members. In considering this recommendation, members should bear in mind that the short-listing of internal candidates should be far more straightforward than short-listing for an external appointment.

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|---------|
| 6.2 | ▪ Advertise post internally | 6 July |
| | ▪ Closing date for applications | 20 July |
| | ▪ Assessment Centre | 25 July |
| | ▪ Appointment by Committee | 27 July |

7. **CONCLUSION**

7.1 A key post in the Council needs to be filled. Although the realistic choices for achieving this are limited, it can still be viewed as a positive opportunity for change. There are realistic opportunities to integrate services further in order to deliver improvements today and tomorrow. Furthermore, we are very fortunate as a Council to have a talent pool to draw from internally to help us achieve our aims (e.g. our heads of service have been developed and nurtured over many years and are now very effective leaders of service).

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That the Council merges the Housing and Social Services Department with parts of the Provider and Leisure Department.
- 8.2 That the residual parts of the Provider and Leisure Department are transferred to other departments. The exact details of which are delegated to the Chief Executive in liaison with the Council Leader.
- 8.3 That the new post arising from this restructuring is advertised internally.
- 8.4 That the new post holder is given a mandate to establish a new management structure which achieves the aims of further internal and external integration as recommended in this report.