

THE CABINET 29/01/19

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Peredur Jenkins, Dilwyn Morgan, W. Gareth Roberts, Gareth Thomas and Ioan Thomas

Also present-

Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director) and Annes Sion (Member Support Officer).

Item 5: Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager)

Item 6: Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department)

1. APOLOGIES

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.
No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

A declaration of interest was received from Cllr Nia Jeffreys as her husband worked as a part-time Fire Officer but it was not a prejudicial 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. GWYNEDD COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE WHITE PAPER: CONSULTATION ON REFORM OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN WALES' GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

The report was submitted by Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn

DECISION

The Cabinet resolved to permit officers to form a final response to the above consultation based on the draft response prepared on behalf of the Council to the Consultation on the reform of governance and funding arrangements for the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales submitted in Appendix A to be adjusted to change the reference to "North Wales" to refer to "the North" and to note that if the funding arrangements did not change to a precept arrangement following the consultation, further consideration would be needed to the membership of the Fire and Rescue Authority in order to ensure that the Councils have a direct voice in the funding decisions.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that it outlined Gwynedd Council's response to the consultation on the reform of the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales' governance and funding arrangements. The current procedure was outlined and it was noted that five elected members were members of the Fire Authority. It was noted that the Council's response supported continuing to keep the individual Authorities as they were and not create one all-Wales Authority. It was added that an Authority which was familiar with and operated locally in the North was needed.

It was noted that there was a suggestion for the Fire and Rescue Authority to be placed under the Police Commissioner. It was explained that the response did not agree with this suggestion and that the Council's membership of the Authority needed to be secured in order to make sure that Gwynedd Council had a strong voice. It was added that it would be possible to have a further discussion on possibly reducing the numbers of elected members.

It was noted that the most important element in the consultation was the financial element as it was a discussion which raised its head annually. It was noted that the public contribution to the Fire and Rescue Authority was outlined under the Gwynedd Council contribution on the Council Tax bill. It was explained that it would be an idea to charge a precept as the Police did, which ensured the Council's accountability as well. It was added that if a precept would be charged, there would be a need for clarity and agreement across Wales.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Attention was drawn to linguistic changes, noting that the reference to "North Wales" should be changed to "the North".
- A question was asked regarding if money for the Fire and Rescue Authority came through the councils why was there not a Joint-Committee as happened with other fields such as Education. It was explained that the Fire and Rescue Authority was a Public Authority in its own right, and was currently funded via money from the Council and as a result elected members were a part of the Authority. It was noted that if the current financial procedure continued following the consultation, further consideration would need to be given to the membership of the Fire and Rescue Authority in order to ensure Gwynedd Council had a voice when discussing financial elements.
- The importance of the Council selecting the members to be a part of the Authority was stressed

6. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The report was submitted by Cllr. W Gareth Roberts

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the department had been taking steps in order to reintroduce and re-examine the way it offers services to the residents of Gwynedd. It was added that the department had been pioneering and active and that it was continuing to develop in order to reach the end of the journey. It was added that, in future, preventative work would be prioritised in order to fulfil people's wishes and to provide early intervention.

It was added that preventative work would address the department's financial problems. It was noted that the department had received funding for temporary projects from the Government, but often the benefits were long-term and the projects were expected to continue after the grant ended through the core budget. This was not always possible.

It was stressed that the department's main challenge was people living longer and a higher number of people with dementia. It was added that work had been done to address the challenges in some areas and specifically on providing high standard dementia support. The importance of providing this care in all areas of Gwynedd was stressed, in order to ensure that support was available close to individuals' homes. It was added that this work was being carried out jointly with Health, and that they were working as one service to support the individual's needs.

It was noted that the number of individuals unable to be discharged from hospital on time because of social reasons had fallen over the past three months. It was noted that working together and the development of the community resources teams were the reasons for this. As well as developing domiciliary care schemes in the Tywyn and Pwllheli area. It was added that Hafod y Gest, namely extra care housing in Porthmadog, had now opened its doors. It was noted that the 'Bridging the Generations' project was progressing well. This was a scheme that brought children, young people and older people together. It was added that the individuals who had taken part had enjoyed the scheme.

Attention was drawn to one major challenge which was emerging across the North, namely the lack of psychiatrists, specifically in Meirionnydd and Arfon. It was noted that this had been escalated to the Health Board for further discussions.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was asked whether it would be possible to combine two projects - Hafod y Gest, Porthmadog and Bridging the Generations, as Ysgol Eifion Wyn was so close to the Hafod y Gest building. It was noted that discussions were taking place with Grŵp Cynefin on this matter, and it was added that the Hafod y Gest location was a Hub available to the entire community. It was added that the individuals staying there could also continue to attend activities within the community in the library and the leisure centre as the building was so central.
- There was a discussion around using teenagers as well for the Bridging the Generations scheme, as well as young children.
- Attention was drawn to the Health Board reassessing all its CHC plans and there was a possibility that contributions would fall with the cost being transferred to local authorities. The current situation was explained, and a discussion was underway. It was added that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) was paying, on average, a higher rate in Gwynedd than any other county. It was noted that it may be a good idea to have a mediator as part of the discussions between the CHC and the Council. It was added that clear criteria were needed for funding care packages so that the rules were entirely clear in relation to who funded which elements.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES

The item was submitted by Cllr. Dilwyn Morgan

RESOLVED

To accept and note the information in the report but in light of the significant overspend reported during the last budgetary review, to ask the Chief Executive, the Head of Finance Department and the Corporate Director to meet with the Cabinet Member and the Department to see which fields could be prioritised in financial terms to avoid wasteful efforts on matters with which nothing can be done.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that he would outline the latest about the department, and the scrutiny members who had been a part of the performance challenge meetings were thanked for their contribution. It was noted that the Cabinet Member was happy with the performance of the department on the whole but that a few slippages had occurred. However, none of the slippages was a cause of concern in terms of safeguarding within the department.

Attention was drawn to the department's priorities, noting that the Supporting Families Strategy was developing more integrated services within the Council with partners. It was noted that mapping work was currently underway. It was added that the work of developing the strategy and the recent announcement from Welsh Government regarding merging their preventative grants had given the department an opportunity to reflect upon its direction. It was added that it

was an extremely exciting time. It was further noted that the Council had a Well-being Support Board, which would promote cross-departmental working in the interests of the residents of Gwynedd. Also, attention was drawn to the Corporate Parenting Strategy, noting that task groups had been set up to try to identify what needed to be improved and to identify good practice. This work was very ambitious.

Attention was drawn to the 'End to End' review, which was a savings scheme and had been joint work between the Children and Supporting Families Department, Finance and the Research and Information Manager. It was noted that the review noted an increase in the number of looked-after children in each category. It was added that there had been a reduction in the number of children with Learning Disabilities / Severe Needs but that there had been an increase in the number within other categories. It was noted that work was ongoing to look at the situation.

It was noted that the information in the review highlighted that it was now difficult to anticipate what cases would come up. It was added that it was difficult to give a specific budget as care needed to be taken and respond to cases as effectively as possible. It was added that work was being done to try to improve the financial situation. It was stressed that the department was trying to be responsible and contribute to the savings targets. It was noted that the cost of residential placements was high and, therefore, the level of overspend was much higher. It was noted that discussions were being held regionally to look at the cost.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that overspend within Children Departments was a national problem, but concerns arose as there was no light at the end of the tunnel. A question was asked about what the Government was doing about the national overspend in the field. The new Minister for Local Government wished to have an open dialogue and to improve the relationship between the Government and the Local Authorities. It was emphasised that there was a need to convey a clear picture of the situation and ensure that it was discussed nationally.
- Despite all the analysis, it was stressed that the department remained unable to anticipate the cases which would arise within the field, and it was added that the department was not only looking within the Council but also at the situation outside the county.
- It was noted that the National review highlighted that the service was working effectively for children, but the financial problem was one that needed to be discussed. It was added that overspend could be seen in all services within the department and it was noted that the Chief Executive, the Head of Finance Department and the Corporate Director should be asked to meet with the Cabinet Member and the Department to see which fields could be prioritised in financial terms to avoid wasteful efforts on matters with which nothing could be done.

8. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

The item was submitted by Cllr Gareth Thomas

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, drawing attention to some projects in the Strategic Plan. It was noted that the Education Principles had now been adopted by the Cabinet and would be considered when responding to any opportunities for the future. It was added that the department was looking forward to working with GwE in order to arrange relevant training in order to strengthen Leadership within schools.

In looking at the Twenty First Century Schools Programme it was noted that the majority of it could currently be seen in the Bangor catchment area. It was noted that construction work had started at Ysgol y Garnedd and arrangements were continuing with the plans at Ysgol y Faenol. With the Bala catchment area, it was expressed that the Head had now been appointed and that staff appointments would now start. It was expressed that the building had been used as a social space and that the first evening had been a great success.

It was noted that the work of transforming the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Provision was underway. It was added that Phase 1 of the transforming work had been completed, but there were a number of other aspects that required attention in Phase 2 in relation to the new act, and creating new arrangements within work processes across our schools.

It was noted that it was not possible to compare this year's results with previous years because of the adaptations to the national policy. It was discussed that English GCSE results had dropped this year as a result of a substantial increase in the margins between grades. It was noted that though Qualifications Wales had published an extremely technical report to justify its processes, officers and the Cabinet Member were of the opinion that the justification was insufficient. It was explained that discussions were ongoing.

Reference was made to the financial situation and the Transport Overspend specifically. The main reasons were noted, which included

- £149,000 as a result of the a new contract following the opening of Ysgol Hafod Lon
- £125,000 due to new contracts in the field of transport
- £73,000 due to an increase in the Dolgellau and Cymerau ABC units as both units were open four days a week, while the previous provision at Ysgol Eifion Wyn had been open five days a week.
- £69,000 due to the impact of re-tendering over the summer.
- £69,000 due to new mainstream contracts.

It was added that no child would be transported without the necessary permission. It was noted that the department was working with the Environment Department and a further report to the Cabinet would follow.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The overspend in the transport service was discussed, noting that there were many reasons for the overspend. It was noted that that the process needed to be examined and lessons learned before moving on.

9. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING, CULTURE AND LEISURE

The report was submitted by Cllr. Craig ab Iago

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the department was doing good and exciting work. Attention was drawn to the Gwynedd Libraries service, noting that 2,422 children had participated in the Summer Reading Challenge, and that 46,851 children's books were read over the challenge period. It was added that over 1,000 children had attended Summer Fun for Children activities.

It was expressed that the new structure of the Youth Service was in place and that the situation was now much better and positive. It was noted that the results were encouraging that 1,107 young people had received support from the service, and a range of activities had been held. It was emphasised that the new structure worked and was successful, and this had happened as a result of collaboration with Community Councils. Attention was drawn to the Dyffryn Nantlle area, noting that a good provision had been created under the youth's leadership.

It was added that the Gwynedd Young Ambassadors Scheme remained successful with 255 Ambassadors giving up hours of their time to volunteer with the plan. It was noted that eight of the ambassadors had been to the National Conference in Cardiff, and the staff member, Hannah Hughes, won the Young Ambassador Officer of the Year award.

It was noted that work was being done on the Council's Housing Strategy, which would show the way for the service for the five years. It was added that the strategy was pioneering. It was reported that there was an increase in the demand for the homelessness service, but that work was being done to reduce it. It was added that a Rehabilitation Officer had been appointed, who would be a contact point providing a service for individuals who needed support.

It was expressed that in future the field would use the scrutiny process more effectively.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that there had been many opportunities for youths following the restructuring of the Youth Service, and it was noted that evidence shows that there were opportunities for young people and that it was a flexible service.
- As the customer satisfaction proportions were high, it was noted that the number of calendar days it took to provide a disabled facilities grant was still high. It was noted that this was because a wide range of solutions were required. It was expressed that in some cases, a planning application was required to modify houses, and others were only modifications inside the house. It was noted that there was certainly a need to work with the planning department and reduce the number of days. It was explained that the individuals who received modifications understood why there was a delay and a clear explanation was proposed along the way.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.40 pm

CHAIRMAN