

THE CABINET TUESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2020

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L. Siencyn, Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Dilwyn Morgan, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas and Catrin Elen Wager

Also in attendance -

Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Rhun ap Iarhos (Senior Solicitor), Dewi Morgan (Assistant Head – Revenue and Risk), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director) and Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 6: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department) and Catrin Love (Health, Safety and Well-being Advisory Services Manager).

Item 7: Roland Evans (Assistant Head of Culture, Economy and Community) and Hugh Edwin Jones (Events Manager)

Item 8 – 10: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager)

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.
An apology was received from Councillor Cemlyn Williams.

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 17 DECEMBER 2019

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2019 as a true record.

6. HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY

Presented by Cllr Nia Jeffreys

DECISION

The new Health, Safety and Well-being Policy was approved.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted with the emphasis that it was a legal requirement to have a

Health, Safety and Well-being Policy. She added that due to the size of the Council, the policy needed to be very clear. She expressed that the current policy dated back to 2015 and that there had been many changes over the past four years. The policy reflected these changes and moved beyond the required legal obligation.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that this field was important and focal to the Council's work. The importance of having firm policies was reiterated.
- A member highlighted that there was no comment by the union and questioned whether this was unusual? It was explained that this was not unusual and that they had no comment or objection to the policy.
- Attention was drawn to a flow-chart indicating the procedure for carrying out consultations, where there was a definite procedure to follow.
- It was expressed that Health and Safety events were taking place and that the policy existed to provide guidance to staff.

7. GWYNEDD PLAN 2018-2023 - RESOURCES FOR THE 'INCREASING THE BENEFITS OF MAJOR EVENTS' SCHEME

The report was presented by Cllr Gareth Thomas

DECISION

It was agreed to commit £50,000 from the Council's Transformation Fund to enable the department to realise the vision of supporting events in accordance with the Gwynedd Plan 2018-23.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that a named officer was looking at the county's events. He added that there was a dedicated role in order to attract events and ensure the best benefit for the businesses of Gwynedd. He expressed that although the contribution offered to event organisers was relatively small, the benefits were also highlighted, which included opportunities for communities and young people and a central place for the Welsh language and the culture of Gwynedd.

He drew attention to a list of highlights from various events during the past year. It was added that discussions were being held regarding various locations throughout Gwynedd, therefore discussions about Y Faenol as a venue were not out of the ordinary.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was enquired how the events received numbers on figures. It was noted that this happened through discussion with the organisers, they then evaluated them and adapted.
- A discussion ensued on how the department looked at the impact of events on the language. In terms of the organising of an event, meetings were held with the organisers where they would sign an agreement. In terms of monitoring, it was noted that the Events Officer attended a large number of the events, and the 'Red Bull Hardline' event was provided as an example where the Welsh language had increasing exposure year on year.
- Attention was drawn to value for money - for every £1 that the Council had invested in events, it brought a profit of £140.26 to the county. A member enquired how could this be measured. It was explained that the Welsh Government had produced a calculator where figures were obtained based on assumptions that were themselves derived from quantifying the benefits that

came about from such events.

8. REVENUE BUDGET 2019-20 - END OF NOVEMBER REVIEW

Presented by Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

Resolved to:

- Accept the report on the end of November 2019 review of the Revenue Budget, and consider the latest financial situation regarding the budgets of each department/service.
- Note that there is significant overspend by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department this year, as complex details need to be clarified in Adult care, the Chief Executive has already called a meeting of the relevant officers and commissioned work to obtain a better understanding and a clear response programme. To try and address the overspend in future, an additional resource has been allocated as part of the bidding process for the 2020/21 budget.
- Note that a Children's Budget Taskforce has been commissioned by the Chief Executive to address the complex financial issues of the Children and Families Department in order to get to the root of the overspend, with the intention of presenting a report to the Cabinet which will detail the response plan. To try and address the overspend in future, an additional resource has been allocated as part of the bidding process for the 2020/21 budget.
- On Corporate budgets, that:
 - (£198k) yield on Council Tax Premium added to the £2.7 million that has already been allocated in 2019/20 is considered for the Housing Strategy.
 - (£75k) relating to capital costs be allocated to the capital programme fund.
 - (£500k) of Corporate underspend be allocated to fund the lack of grant in the area of sustainable social services.
 - (£312k) be used to fund one-off bids that have been presented by the Departments for the purpose of 2020/21 expenditure.
 - the balance of (£502k) goes to the Council's general balances.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that the report highlighted some signs of difficulties with achieving savings. The member expressed that there were some departments that would overspend, and these were discussed individually.

Adults, Health and Well-being Department – the latest forecasts suggested over £1.8 million of overspend by the department. The overspend was partly alleviated to £658k following the receipt of a grant and use of one-off funding.

Children and Supporting Families Department – it was noted that the level of overspend in the department had intensified further to £3.2 million with £2.6 million forecast to be overspent on placements, where the majority of the overspend resulted from out-of-county placements. It was added that a Budget Taskforce had been established to address financial issues in the department, and it was noted that this situation was not uncommon throughout Wales.

Highways Department – overspend continued in the area of waste collection and

disposal, adding that transitional costs before moving to new arrangements had led to the overspend.

Attention was drawn to Corporate underspend with favourable forecasts of additional Council Tax yield and Council Tax Premium yield, but despite this there was a continued trend of back-dating transfers from Council Tax to Non-domestic Rates. It was also emphasised that the number claiming Council Tax reductions was at its lowest for the fourth year in succession. It was added that there was a net underspend on Corporate budgets, which meant that the pressure on a number of budgets was not as intense as originally predicted.

The Chief Executive provided a summary of the work that was being undertaken to investigate the overspend in Children and Supporting Families and the Adults Department. To reach a conclusion and identify alternative opportunities in the Children's field would take longer than what was anticipated for the Adults field, but the Head of Finance was making appropriate provision in drawing up the 2020/21 budget.

He reported further that we was not overly concerned about overspend in the Highways Department at present, as there was already a plan in place to ensure that the waste system operated as efficiently as possible in order to bring this overspend under control.

9. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019/20 – END OF NOVEMBER REVIEW

Presented by Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

To accept the report on the end of November review (30 November 2019 position) of the capital programme, and approve the revised funding as shown in part 4 of the report, namely:

- £50,000 decrease in the use of borrowing
- £1,072,000 increase in the use of grants and contributions
- £114,000 increase in the use of capital receipts
- £23,000 decrease in the use of revenue contributions
- No change in the use of the capital reserve
- £228,000 increase in the use of renewal and other reserves

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and the decision noted. It was highlighted that the revised report indicated a total of £89.1 million over the next three years. He added that there had been a £1.341 million increase in the budget since the previous review.

He emphasised that there were definite plans in place to invest £31.8 million in 2019/20 on capital schemes. He added that £13 million of this would be funded through grants. He stated that an additional £9.2 million of proposed expenditure had been re-profiled from 2019/20 to 2020/21 but this change did not cause any loss of funding to the Council.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The rights of employees working on schemes funded specifically by grants were discussed, and it was expressed that a further discussion was needed on the matter.
- We should rejoice at the £31.7 million of capital schemes for 2019/20, and the members thanked the staff for planning projects in advance so that the Council

could take advantage of last-minute funding.

- Attention was drawn to the £1.9 million that would be available to improve school buildings, which would have implications for the assets plan.

10. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

Presented by Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and the Councillor noted that the report was based on the department's performance-challenging meetings where a member of the Audit and Governance Committee had also been in attendance. He drew attention to the main matters which included the Information Technology Strategy, noting that progress was slow at present as the department was concentrating on an education grant project which had a tight timetable.

In respect of the electronic document and records management system (EDRMS), he noted that the scheme was progressing very positively but that a few problems had arisen. He noted the need to circulate a message to all users, requesting feedback about the system. He referred to the Information Technology Service, and stated that time had been invested in training staff so that they were equipped to respond to, and resolve, users' problems over the telephone at the first point of contact. He also highlighted that there had been a three-week period in November where the Council's systems had operated from a back-up server on three occasions due to an outage. He emphasised that the users had not been aware of this, and that their work was unaffected.

It was noted that the total value of various debts over 6 months old, excluding deferred payments and debts referred to other services for further action, was higher on 30 September 2019 than on 31 March 2019. It was noted that one of the reasons for this was the Health Board delaying payments in order to hold discussions to determine who was liable for paying.

He highlighted one of the main pieces of work accomplished in recent months, which was the valuation of the Pension Fund. He noted that the funding level of the Fund had increased from 91% in 2016 to 108% this year. This meant that we could see an element of reduction in the Council's contribution as employer.

It was noted that the Cabinet Member was satisfied with the department's performance, but there was room for improvement.

Observations arising from the discussion

- A member expressed that small businesses appreciated the fact that invoices were paid without delay by the Council.
- The members discussed that fact that 9 people had made contact with the recovery team, and that they had been referred to the CAB for debt advice which was a much lower figure than in previous years. It was expressed that perhaps the Council needed to encourage people to discuss their situation with the staff, so that they could be directed to the right support.

11. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The report was presented by Cllr Gareth Griffith

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting the work that the department had been doing over recent months. It was expressed that the performance-challenging meeting had taken place with the Cabinet Member together with the Corporate Director.

The Member highlighted that the Environment Department had established a new system called Tascomi, which would be used by various services within the department and which would provide better services to the residents. He added that savings had either been, or were on track to be realised and that the department was likely to under-spend this year.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Attention was drawn to the indicator relating to the number of appeals to the independent adjudicators that were approved, noting that the number remained at 0. This demonstrated that officers' discretion was used correctly. It was added that perhaps the report should note how many appeals went to panel when a complaint arose.

12. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The report was presented by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, with the main points in the report highlighted. The member drew attention to one of the department's main measures, 'did we do what matters to the individual?' and he emphasised that this is what drove the service.

He stated that some of the measures were statutory ones by the Welsh Government, such as the rate of delayed care for social care reasons. He added that this measure did drive activity but did not reflect the citizen's experience. He said that Workforce and Recruitment in the care field continued to be a priority for the department. On the whole, the member was satisfied with the department's performance.

Observations arising from the discussion

- A Cabinet member thanked the staff for the service he had received by the department, and from his experience, it was a commendable service. A member stated that the department had not included any graphs indicating their performance, but that stories like these reflected the quality of the service.

- It was highlighted that the challenge would be to consider how individuals' experiences could be converted to a measure to show the quality of the service.

13. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The report was presented by Cllr Gareth Thomas

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, with the main points in the report noted. It was expressed that the libraries had been working very closely with the residents on updating bus passes. It was added that the Welsh Public Libraries Standards had presented a very encouraging picture of Gwynedd Libraries.

An update was provided on work in Neuadd Dwyfor, noting that a users team had been established in order to consult with local people. Concern was expressed regarding overspend in Storiel, however it was noted that the service was currently reviewing the arrangements.

The 'businesses receiving support to prosper' scheme was highlighted, which ensures a way of working in the Council that places business needs at the centre, and reduces barriers.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Attention was drawn to a delay with the parking savings scheme, noting that some departments believed that increasing income reduced the savings. It was added that should there be no rise in income, it could be difficult to find a solution.

14. FORWARD WORK PROGRAM

Presented by Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn

DECISION

To approve the Forward Work Programme included in the papers for the meeting, subject to minor amendments.

DISCUSSION

It was noted that minor amendments were required to the programme before it was published on the website. It was added that the Departments should notify the Democratic Services Team promptly of items to be placed on the forward programme, and if any items were slipping.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.30 pm

CHAIRMAN