

The report was submitted by Cllr Berwyn Parry Jones.

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, conveying appreciation in the first place for the employees working in difficult and busy circumstances gritting roads during the recent cold weather, and they were thanked for their work. It was reported that the Waste Collection and Treatment Services had been transferred to the Environment Department, and Gwynedd Consultancy Department had now moved to the Highways and Municipal Department. The Cabinet Member wished to note his appreciation for the work of all the Department's officers, and to recognise their key contribution during this period. The intention to change the Department's name following the recent changes was noted. The preferred name following consultation with staff was the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department.

It was noted that there was a significant amount of work facing the Department over the coming months, including a review of the Street Cleaning Service and also a very detailed examination of the budget. A report was provided on the projects in the current Council Plan which included the Clean and Tidy Communities project, Strengthen Communication and Engagement and the Service Mapping project. As part of this project it was intended to place the Department's different assets on a map where customers would be able to view the status of the asset and report any defects such as street lamps or grit bins.

Attention was drawn to the Fleet Strategy, and the opportunity was taken to emphasise the decision made by the Climate Change Board, that no manager should renew or dispose of any vehicle without prior discussion with the Fleet Manager. It was explained that this was crucial to the success of the Fleet Strategy. This was due to a perception that there had been excessive purchasing of vehicles on an ad-hoc basis in the past. It was believed that this guidance would soon be shared with the Departments.

Reference was made to other projects in the report, such as the Fairbourne project, before moving on to report on the Department's performance, noting that performance was satisfactory. Reference was made to replacing all the Council's street lights to LED technology, in addition to the street cleaning work, highways maintenance and the public toilets service.

In conclusion, reference was made to the work of Gwynedd Consultancy Department (YGC), a service which generated a significant income for the Council, whilst also undertaking statutory functions in water and flood management, before referring to the Department's financial position. It was noted that there was currently an overspend of £600,000 within the existing Highways and Municipal Department following the transfer of some services to the Environment Department, but there was work in the pipeline to understand the reasons for the overspend and to take steps to reconcile the situation. It was reported that YGC were underspending by nearly £30,000.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The members expressed their thanks for the report, and the change to the Department's name was welcomed.
- There was some uncertainty about which Department held responsibilities and executive functions, and that there was an element of complexity.
- The appreciation of the Department's work in the recent cold weather was echoed, and it was added that drivers and pedestrians should consider whether their journeys were necessary as the Council was unfortunately unable to grit everywhere.
- It was suggested that the procedure for prioritising road gritting should be conveyed to all Council Members so that they were clear about the arrangements. It was added that there were arrangements to grit class one routes, and that the Department was under pressure to respond to all locations. It was agreed that the procedure should be brought to the attention of Council Members, possibly through a reference in the Leader's bulletin or a note from the Head of Department. Reference was made to App Gwynedd that listed which roads were gritted.
- It was reiterated that the report contained much good and positive news. It was considered that there were robust and realistic plans in place to address the overspend in future.
- In relation to the income generated by Gwynedd Consultancy service, a question was asked about whether there was a target income. The Head of Department confirmed that there was a target, although he did not have the exact figure to hand. It was explained that there was an intention to bring a report to the Leadership Team on YGC in the new year, and the report could refer to the income element.
- A question was asked about whether lights could be dimmed, particularly in the middle of the night. It was noted that this would be included in the savings scheme.
- Reference was made to the charging points that had been installed, and whether they generated an income. It was confirmed that the charging points in car parks were the responsibility of the Environment Department.

At the end of the meeting, the County's residents, fellow members and Council Officials were wished a Merry Christmas.

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 2.05pm.

CHAIR