

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

REPORT TO A MEETING OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

Date of Meeting:	7 March 2017
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Ioan Thomas Cabinet Member for Housing, Customer Care, Libraries, Deprivation and Equality
Contact Officer:	Morwena Edwards, Corporate Director
Contact Number:	Telephone 01286 679468
Title of Item:	Performance Report of Housing, Customer Care, Libraries, Deprivation and Equality

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update you on what has been achieved in the field I am responsible for as the Cabinet Member for Housing, Customer Care, Libraries, Deprivation and Equality. This will include outlining the latest with the pledges in the Strategic Plan; where the performance measures have reached; and the latest in terms of the savings and cuts schemes.
- 1.2 I will remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at meetings of the relevant management teams, which also included a representation from the scrutiny committee.
- 1.3 On the whole, I am satisfied with the performance of most projects and measures for which I am responsible. Though there is some concern about some Galw Gwynedd measures.

2. THE DECISION SOUGHT

2.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

3.1 In order to ensure effective performance management.

4. STRATEGIC PLAN PROJECTS

4.1 Working Together against Poverty

Since I last reported to you, the work of promoting skills to cope with managing the household income and debts is underway with 'Penny wise' events held. In addition, Digital Resilience Drop-in Sessions were held throughout the county in libraries and sessions have been trialled in surgeries and supermarkets. I have met with Council departments in order to seek further information about how their work contributes towards the outcomes of the Tackling Poverty Strategy. Following those meetings, I am confident that programmes within the fields are being diverted to the communities of need which have been identified in the strategy.

4.2 T9 - Housing Supply Strategy

4.2.1 The purpose of this project is to implement our strategy to increase the supply and variety of housing in order to ensure that our housing supply is suitable for the needs of the people of Gwynedd. The project will lead to different solutions in different areas.

4.2.2 Establishing Affordable Housing for Gwynedd residents in rural areas -

The work of submitting three planning applications is underway with a local consultation on the Penygroes scheme, which is the most mature of the three. 2,000 homes were targeted and 112 responses were received. 46 respondents noted that they need to move with different occupancies on the site in question in Penygroes. It is intended to submit a report of the findings to the Llanllyfni Community Council, Gwynedd Council and Grŵp Cynefin before the end of January.

4.2.3 Grŵp Cynefin will undertake a survey via the Rural Housing Enablers in the Waunfawr, Llanuwchllyn and Bethesda areas over the coming two months with the intention of submitting applications for intermediate rent houses and affordable houses to be bought depending on the results of the survey. Should the three planning applications be successful, up to 39 homes would be provided across Gwynedd.

4.2.4 It is likely that the financial model in its current form will show that financial support is needed to commence the model and to maximise the affordable element. Information about the Waunfawr business plan will be submitted to the Council shortly. Welsh Government has shown an interest in this model and is eager to make contact. Discussions have already

commenced in order to identify options together with the possibility of providing grant assistance to commence the initiative.

4.2.5 Empty Homes Back Into Use - I reported in the previous report that discussions between the empty homes team and North Wales Housing Association have been held. They will look what resources are available with the intention of providing possible supported housing for homeless people.

4.2.6 Since the last update, North Wales Housing Association will likely not be in a position to move ahead with the schemes due to their current financial situation. As a way forward, it is suggested that the Empty Homes Team look at the option of extending the team's work. There is also a possibility of giving other housing associations another offer, but this is ambitious. I am confident that I will be able to outline the next steps to be taken in my next report.

4.2.7 Provision for homeless people - The Homelessness Service is looking at options of using empty properties in order to have a Supported Housing model in the area. The unit is currently appraising the potential of one location in Dolgellau and I have emphasised the need for early engagement with this project. The Unit is also proceeding with the review of its hostel service.

4.2.8 Provision for older persons to promote independence - As reported previously, a meeting has been held with the Commissioning Service and Housing Associations to analyse data in terms of the areas identified to see what gaps exist. The study has now been completed by the unit which has identified five communities where provision is needed for older people. Nevertheless, the unit has reported that there are no longer any resources to proceed with this programme as intended. This is due to a lack of resources within the Housing Strategy Unit and it is therefore unlikely that I will be able to report back to the Cabinet in February on definite options for the areas identified. Guidance is needed from the Adults Department to decide on the locations on which to concentrate and on the priorities. The Unit will also be preparing a business case to look at funding an additional resource in order to enable mature schemes.

4.3. C5 - Extending the use of self-service

4.3.1 Over the past months a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system has been developed which could be used across all Council Services. By now the the system is live and provides a back office system for the self-service system and records requests for service.

4.3.2 The first process to use the new system is the garden waste collection ordering system. This service went live on 24 October 2016 and up to 14 December, 6,903 requests had been received. 33% (2,296) of these were on-line requests, **54%** (3,724) were telephone requests, **11%** (787) were face to face and **2%** (96) were requests by post.

4.3.3 As I explained last time, I have asked the Project Leader to undertake further work in order to be able to provide an estimate of the initial savings which are likely to arise from the project. It is hoped that we will be in a position to submit the business case for Cabinet approval before March.

4.4. C8 - Information Governance Project

4.4.1 Since I last reported on the progress, the training sessions have continued with staff completing the e-learning module. In addition, 164 staff have attended briefing sessions including Heads of Secondary and Primary schools, Economy staff and Corporate Support staff and the feedback was positive.

4.4.2 The protection marks software now works with members of the Information Management Team using it together with some staff in the Adults department. Use will be extended further over the coming months.

4.4.3 In order to establish what we have achieved to date, I have asked the Project Leader to assess the propriety of our information security arrangements and to report back to me on where we have reached on the journey. I will update you with the findings in my next report.

5. MEASURING PERFORMANCE

5.1. On the whole, I am happy with the performance of the Housing field and as you are aware, over the past few months, the Housing Service Units have been considering their purpose in relation to the residents of Gwynedd and how their performance should, therefore, be measured.

5.2 The **Homelessness Unit** has set out its purpose and has established two main measures. There has been a decline in terms of the days **it takes to achieve what's important** (78 days this year compared with 69 in 2015/16) and the **length of stay in temporary accommodation** (131 days this year compared with 126 in 2015/16).

5.3 As reported in the previous report, it is believed that there is a combination of reasons for the decline in performance such as the fact that some individuals, who are difficult to accommodate for various reasons, remain in temporary accommodation for a lengthy stay which pushes the average higher and higher. In addition to this, recent legislative changes, changes in welfare benefits and staff sickness all contribute.

5.4 Work is underway in order to try to respond to this, such as the demand for establishing a permanent Homelessness Prevention Fund to address the increasing need and the new statutory responsibilities as a result of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 which came into force in April 2015.

5.5 The number of referrals to the Unit has increased significantly - 560 in 2014/15, 648 in 2015/16 and 379 to date this year (but 794 is projected by the end of the year should this year's trend continue). Though this is a National trend, I have asked the unit to identify the specific trend in Gwynedd. Steps will need to be taken to understand the nature of the difficulties and requirements of the increasing

referrals to the unit in order to plan to better address their needs. I will update you on any developments in future performance reports.

- 5.6 The **Supporting People Unit** has introduced measures and data which they feel measure their purpose as a Unit. We are awaiting confirmation of whether these are the final measures to add to the list of performance measures. I am happy with the performance of the unit on the whole, but I recommend that the unit seeks to identify and understand the obstacles and support needs of the 25% of individuals whose needs were not met and then put steps in place to respond. I recommend that the Supporting People Unit and the Homelessness Unit consider collaborating on the task of profiling the nature of the referrals to identify the obstacles and the severe and increasing needs that are reported by both Units, such as Mental Health problems, in order to plan services to better address their needs.
- 5.7 The **Grants and Enforcement Unit** has introduced performance measures which, in their opinion, measure their purpose. One example of the measures under consideration is the percentage of the serious hazards and defective hazards that have been improved to an acceptable level via enforcement in rented homes. The performance of this measure is currently 94%. A request has been made for the unit to look at their measures again in order to ensure that we are measuring the right things. I believe that there is a need to separate the **average number of calendar days taken to issue a Disabled Facilities Grant** measure to complex cases and simpler cases in order to ensure a clearer picture of what is being achieved.
- 5.8 I am pleased to report that the performance of the '**Strat6**' **Number of affordable units secured for Gwynedd** measure is performing satisfactorily. A total of 35 units are anticipated by the end of the financial year. Though this is lower than the target of 56, it is anticipated that 12 units will open in April, which is outside the time-frame. In addition, it is possible to meet the target but this is dependent on the numbers of empty houses that the Grants and Enforcement unit can bring back into use.
- 5.9 I am generally happy with the performance of the majority of the measures of the Customer Care units (Galw Gwynedd and Siopau Gwynedd, Registration, Information and the Web Team). I have some concerns about the performance of a couple of Galw Gwynedd measures but steps have been put in place in order to respond to the situation.
- 5.10 The **Information Management Service** is responsible for ensuring that we have firm arrangements in place in order to protect data and information. No additional incident has been recorded for the measure **Number of information incidents (since 1 April)** since the last meeting, so it currently stands at 3 incidents. This compares with 6 for the same period in 2015/16 and 7 in 2014/15.
- 5.11 The Council's website is an important resource which allows the public to find information and use self-service aspects. The latest information from the **Website Team** shows that the **% of users reporting that they are dissatisfied/very dissatisfied** and the **% who did not find what they were looking for** are low and have remained consistent since the beginning of April.
- 5.12 The **Galw Gwynedd and Siopau Gwynedd Units** seek to provide prompt and accurate assistance for customers to access Council services by providing

answers, guidance and service. It is noted that there has been an increase in the **Percentage of phone calls answered by Galw Gwynedd (CYSCW01)** to 1.10 minutes compared with 0.42 minutes in 2015-16 and also the **Percentage of calls not being answered by Galw Gwynedd (CYSCW04)** has increased to 15.16% compared with 7.5% for 2015-16.

- 5.13 This reflects the increase in the number of calls that Galw Gwynedd deals with with 29,862 more calls received between April and November 2016 compared with the same period in 2015. As I noted in my last report, the changes to the garden bin arrangements have led to a significant increase in the work of the Units in question since the end of October by responding to enquiries and taking payments.
- 5.14 Work is underway to avoid unnecessary calls to Galw Gwynedd and from the beginning of February onwards the officers' extension numbers will appear on phones rather than the Galw Gwynedd number (01766 771000). I have also asked the Unit Manager to look at options to bring the figure back down including bringing in additional officers temporarily to answer the phone. I will update you with the latest situation in my next report.
- 5.15 The purpose of the **Registration Unit** is to enable the public to register events in accordance with the requirements of the act and provide a certificate copies service. It is noted that the performance of the measures has been maintained or has improved during the period in question compared with the previous year but in order to get a better understanding of the situation I have asked them to outline the reasons why the performance is not 100%. I have also suggested that the **Percentage of satisfaction questionnaires that score the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Service as good or better (DCCof04)** should be measured at the point of contact rather than annually.
- 5.16 The **Libraries and Information Service** has implemented the "More than Books" Strategy since September 2016. The Penygroes arrangements have now been confirmed, and the consultation and notice of modifying the opening hours of the Principal Libraries is effective since January. A Libraries Users Survey was carried out in October 2016 and an analysis of the responses to the questionnaire is expected from CIPFA by February. The Service reports its measures annually. I have pressed upon the Service to report more regularly.

6. OTHER MATTERS

- 6.1 **Equality** - As you are aware, work has been ongoing but there has been some delay in the implementation of the work programme involved with the Strategic Equality Plan due to the illness of a key member of staff. Consequently, I have asked the relevant officers to look again at the work programme in relation to **Objective 1: Improve our arrangements to discover and use the opinion of people who share equality characteristics** and **Objective 2: Improve our equality impact assessment arrangements** and submit an amended work programme for delivery to the next performance challenging meeting. I will update you on any developments in my next performance report.
- 6.2 I am pleased to report on the success of **Objective 3: Create the circumstances for people from different backgrounds to represent the people of Gwynedd by standing in an election to become an elected member**. As part of the project to Promote Diversity in Democracy, a second video was launched in September

which provides information about the Council's services. In November, a letter was sent to all Community Council clerks to raise awareness about the project. In December, presentations were given to the Area Committees/Forums on the arrangements for Local Government elections in 2017. Also, in January, three awareness-raising sessions were held in Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau for people interested in being a Councillor. To date, 84 individuals have filled in a questionnaire noting whether there are any barriers to them standing in an election. The next meeting of the Diversity in Democracy Sub-group will be held on 31 January and an update is expected from the Communication Unit regarding the viewing figures for the video.

- 6.3 **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment** - We have submitted an assessment of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs jointly with Anglesey Council and I am pleased to report that we have received confirmation from Welsh Government that the assessment has been approved.

7. SAVINGS/FINANCIAL POSITION

- 7.1 On the whole, no concerns have been stated historically regarding the Department's ability to realise efficiency savings or the cuts in the Housing field. However, it is believed that the report on the third quarter of the 2016/17 revenue budget will suggest that savings from two schemes will slip.
- 7.2 In relation to 2017/18, there is some concern regarding the ability to realise several schemes as had been anticipated originally. Though work is in the pipeline to ensure progress with all schemes, it must be borne in mind that there are only three months until the beginning of the 2017/18 financial year when budgets will be cut.
- 7.3 Consequently, it is clear that a challenge has been highlighted recently in terms of the ability to realise the savings as anticipated. To this end, I have asked the department to look at this to ensure that alternative schemes are in place.

8. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

8.1. None to note.

9. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

9.1. Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. Chief Executive:

"The report draws attention to several important matters. Progress with affordable housing, empty properties and provision for homeless people are matters of great importance to residents and it is good to see that the Cabinet Member is focused on these matters. Also, in the Customer Care field, I am aware that very positive discussions were held recently at the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on the improvements in the pipeline regarding the Self-service Project and the Council's arrangements for answering calls."

ii. Monitoring Officer:

No observations from a propriety perspective

iii. Head of Finance Department:

Any observations, as required, will be submitted orally at the Cabinet meeting.

9.2 Views of the Local Member:

9.2.1 Not a local matter.

9.3. Results of Any Consultation:

9.3.1 None to note

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Performance Measures