

# GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

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| <b>Date:</b>            | 9 January 2018                                       |
| <b>Title of Item:</b>   | Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance |
| <b>Purpose:</b>         | To accept and note the information in the report.    |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>  | Councillor Peredur Jenkins                           |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b> | Dilwyn Williams, Chief Executive                     |

## Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on what has been happening in the fields within my remit as Cabinet Member for Finance. This includes outlining the latest developments of promises within the Council's Plan; where we have reached with measuring performance; 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 a meeting of the Finance Department management team, which also included a representation from the Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 On the whole, I am comfortable with the performance of the project and performance measures for which I am responsible, or that relevant steps have been taken to improve performance.

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## 2. **THE DECISION SOUGHT**

2.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

## 3. **THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION**

3.1. In order to ensure effective performance management.

## 4. **STRATEGIC PLAN PROJECTS**

### ***Effective and Efficient Council***

#### 4.1. **FfG5 - SInformation Technology Strategy (IT)**

4.2 Since I last reported, there has been further progress in the work of the Strategy.

4.3 **Digital Channel and Facilitating Contact with the Council:** The developments of the digital channel have been given priority, and was recently launched. The next step in the development of the Council's self-service system is an app that will allow the public to send in photographs including geographical information in order to report problems and facilitate the front-line services' work as they respond.

4.4 **Innovation:** The research work currently being undertaken as part of the IT strategy is coming to fruition and is paying dividends according to the Service. Initial steps have been taken in order to bring public bodies closer as a group of SOCITM (Society of Information Technology Managers) in terms of the development and innovation of digital services for public bodies. Going forward, the hope is to establish a body that is joint-funded between the Local Authorities and the Assembly in order to collaborate and share developments among public bodies in order to improve the digital service being offered by the public sector.

#### 4.5 **C7 Electronic document and records management system (EDRMS)**

4.6 The work of disseminating the use of the system to the Adults, Health and Well-being and Children and Supporting Families Departments has involved work that was more complicated than imagined in order to meet their needs. This means that the timetable has slipped and the service intends to finish disseminating iGwynedd to all Council Departments by the end of summer 2018.

4.7 I have an element of concern regarding whether the system is delivering what it has been developed to achieve. To this end, I have again asked the Project Group to report back to the next meeting, noting the original intent and whether the system is achieving that.

## **PERFORMANCE**

**Appendix 1** provides a full report on the performance measures related to my portfolio.

- 5.1 There are 11 Services within the Finance Department. I have challenged the measures of the **Payroll, Finance and Accountancy, Investment and Treasury Management, Income, Taxes** and **Benefits Services** and I am satisfied with the performance.
- 5.2 The **Risk and Insurance Service** supports the Council's departments as they assess the threats and opportunities which they could face when providing their services and prioritise their activities based on the assessment. They also protect the taxpayers' interests by ensuring appropriate insurance arrangements and dealing with claims.
- 5.3 It is noted that the performance of the measure **Protecting the taxpayer's financial interests: Percentage of public accountability claims refused (settled for £0) by the Unit (CD4.01)** has increased back to 85.7% compared with 66.6% in quarter 1 of 2017/18. We successfully defended six claims out of seven made. The one permitted claim related to damage caused to a Gwynedd citizen's vehicle when work was being carried out nearby. This type of claim is one that is not challenged on the principle of compensating for damage caused by the Council to the property of Gwynedd residents.
- 5.4 The purpose of the **Internal Audit Service** is to give the citizens and the Council confidence in the Council's management environment and governance arrangements by reporting independently and objectively to the Head of Finance and the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 5.5 By the end of the second quarter, the **Percentage of audits in the Audit Plan which have either been closed or have a published final report (CD2.03)** reached 26.56%, compared with 3.33% at the end of the first quarter, as noted in my previous report. Although substantial improvement has been made to bring the performance back to the expected level, the unit's work will need to be prioritised carefully to make the most effective use of the resources available. I am glad that the situation has improved, and I will keep an eye on the measure in future.
- 5.6 The **Information Technology Service** supports and enables all the Council's services to serve the residents of Gwynedd in an effective, flexible and secure way. It is seen that the **Percentage of network availability (TG01)** has remained fairly stable, the performance during the period in question being at 99.96% compared with 99.97% in the previous period.
- 5.7 At the last challenging performance meeting, we discussed the problems experienced with the Council's computer system for a period during the summer, noting that problems with telephone exchanges had caused two out of the four problems.
- 5.8 The Service continues to work on improving the resilience of the network, working closely with suppliers and partners. One idea that has been mentioned is sharing back-up facilities with other similar organisations in order to increase capacity and resilience and share costs. This would also lead to maintaining an infrastructure that would be used rather than stand idle waiting for an emergency.
- 5.9 Administrating the Local Government Pension Scheme on behalf of over 40 employers in order to calculate and pay pensions promptly and accurately is the remit of the **Pensions Service**. The performance of the measure **Average number of work days taken to send a letter notifying the value of retirement benefits - estimate (CD9.03)** improved, as it dropped from 7.40 working days in the first

quarter, to 2.40 in the second quarter. This is due to moving resources during a quiet period to assist with the work. As the performance has improved so much, I asked the Service to gather data about the contributing factors in order to ensure whether it is possible to maintain the performance on the same level.

- 5.10 It was noted that causes of internal errors had increased for the same period from 6 cases to 13, highlighting the compromise being made often between urgency and accuracy. I have asked the service to bear this in mind, aiming for a service that performs consistently accurately and within a reasonable period of time. The Service is also continuing to work on ensuring that the organisation whether are part of the scheme inform us of any changes in a timely way.
- 5.11 The **Payroll Service** ensures that everyone who receives a salary from the Council receives it accurately and in a timely way, as well as providing accounts for paying outside bodies such as HMRC.
- 5.12 The measure **Number of workers contacting about any shortcoming in the salary payment process (CD8.08)** has consistently been between 60 and 69 in 2016/17 and in quarter 1 of 2017/18. However, the number shot up to 121 in quarter 2. The Service notes that there is suspicion that enquiries have been mis-recorded as complaints which has increased the number. The Service intends to investigate the differences between complaints and enquiries when recording the calls. The service also notes that a number of enquiries are made by employees who are contacting to find out how much their salary for the month would be. I feel that the fact that some of the Council's employees are contacting in this manner is a reflection of the vulnerable situation of some of the workforce, and so I have asked the Service to take steps to mitigate this uncertainty. In response the Service noted that it intends to look at informing staff about which weeks fall into which pay periods, amongst other things.

## **FINANCIAL POSITION / SAVINGS**

- 6.1 By now, we can account that the 2016/17 and 2017/18 savings schemes have been realised. In terms of 2018/19, one savings scheme remains Scheme Cut 13 - Stop Paying the Fee to pay Council Tax in post offices. It remains difficult to realise this saving in the way originally intended, and work is being undertaken to find a solution and realise the saving in an alternative manner.

## **NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

- 7.1 None to note.

## **ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION**

- 8.1 **Views of the Statutory Officers:**

**i. Monitoring Officer:**

No comments regarding propriety

**ii. Head of Finance Department:**

I confirm the accuracy of the contents of the report, and I will support the Cabinet member to achieve the relevant aims.

8.2 **Views of the Local Member:**

8.3 Not a local matter.

8.4 **Results of Any Consultation:**

8.5 None to note.

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## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1 - Performance Measures**

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