

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

Report for a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date:	22 January 2019
Title of Item:	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for the Corporate Support and Legal Departments
Purpose:	To accept and note the information in the report.
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nia Jeffreys
Contact Officer:	Dilwyn Williams, Chief Executive

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 the Corporate Support and Legal Department. This includes outlining progress against the pledges within the Council's Plan, where we have reached in relation to the performance measures, and the latest in terms of savings and cuts.
- 1.2 I would like to remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at the management team meetings of the Corporate Support Department and the Legal Service, which also included a representation from the Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 I am generally happy with the progress of the lead projects within the Strategic Plan and the performance measures for which I am responsible.

2 THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

3 COUNCIL PLAN PROJECTS

- 3.1 **Promoting the use of the Welsh language within the Council's Services**
- 3.2 As a Council, we are very proud to be operating internally through the medium of Welsh and staff are required to be able to communicate effectively in Welsh and English to an appropriate standard and in order to fulfil their duties. In order to ensure we support our staff to provide the best service for our residents we have selected six front line services within six departments, and have begun the work of assessing the linguistic needs of

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post holders. Officers and managers alike have welcomed this support. I am also pleased to say, thanks to the work of the Health, Safety and Well-being service, that the IOSH course is now available in Welsh.

3.3 The Welsh Language in Public Services

3.4 In December, the Public Services Board passed the draft "Welsh Language Working Group's Action Plan", and we as a Council are one of the partners who will be implementing this plan. There are several sub-headings to this plan, one being "the citizen's experience". The aim of this work is for the Board's partners in turn to encourage residents to start conversations in Welsh when contacting them, and for discussions to be increasingly through the medium of Welsh. As a Council we have been able to share good practice with our fellow Board members, and we will encourage the people of Gwynedd to make use of the Welsh language services provided by our fellow Board members.

3.5 Gwynedd Businesses using the Welsh language

3.6 We are continuing to research the needs in this field, and it is clear that greater clarity is needed about the support available for businesses and the way we use our processes and influence within the Council to influence language use in the private sector. I hope that further progress will have been made in this field by the next time I report to you.

3.7 Keeping the Benefit Local

3.8 I am pleased to report that the percentage of local revenue expenditure by the Council has increased by 1% in the period of July to September, compared to the same time last year (from 62% to 63%). The percentage of revenue and capital expenditure collectively, however, has increased by 4% (from 55% to 59%). It is important that we persist in our endeavours to strike a balance between ensuring the best value for money for our residents and the benefit of spending with local companies.

3.9 The work of encouraging local businesses to compete for Council work is ongoing. The Service has been offering support and training for local businesses so that they can meet the necessary health and safety standards. A great deal of work has also been done on drawing up new contracts to provide protective clothing, in order to give local companies the best possible opportunity to submit work tenders.

3.10 Much praiseworthy work is being done in this field, either by continuing to issue contracts to companies that employ locally, or by providing those companies with new contracts. I am eager to share more of these encouraging stories with the people of Gwynedd in future, and to celebrate success.

3.11 Reducing the Pay Gap between Women and Men

- 3.12 The purpose of this project is to boost the number of women who attain higher positions within the Council in order to reduce the pay gap between men and women. At the end of the previous financial year the gap was 9.9% on average. Even though over 71% of the Council's workforce are women, over half of them work part time, and of these a substantial number are in jobs with salary levels below the Council's average salary.
- 3.13 Since so many women remain in lower paid jobs, there is no quick fix solution to the problem of reducing the pay gap. We must deal with this situation through planning for a long term solution.
- 3.14 The senior officers of the Council and I agree that the focus of this project needs to shift to concentrate on eliminating any element of the work conditions and environment within the Council that is a barrier to women applying for leadership and management posts in future. We are researching the conditions within the Council and are drawing on national and international research in order to move forward with this important work.
- 3.15 **Developing Leadership**
- 3.16 The development programme for honing the leadership skills of Elected Members and officers is moving forward promisingly. We as Cabinet members have attended workshops that have helped us strengthen our skills when working as a team and to concentrate on our political vision. Two of our Elected Members, Councillors Paul Rowlinson and Catrin Wager, are also attending the Welsh Local Government Association Leadership Academy.
- 3.17 Our focus in developing the skills of our managers within the Council is to emphasise our need to see a culture of leading people, not a regime that operates only to manage people. We provide our senior officers with further training to develop their skills, and four Senior Officers (including the Head of Highways Agency) have begun the Senior Leadership programme with the Wales Academy.
- 3.18 The Managers Network has also been established and this will give managers across the Council the opportunity to share good practice and receive training. This work coincides with the work carried out under the Implementing Ffordd Gwynedd project. Jobs descriptions for managers on all levels are reviewed alongside the work of conducting a review of management, and I will be able to report on this further next time.
- 3.19 **Empowering Units to Implement Ffordd Gwynedd**
- 3.20 130 managers and some other officers have now received six days' training to enable them to implement Ffordd Gwynedd. Although these courses are still being run, we have evaluated the arrangements thus far and have discovered that the course is enthusiastically supported but that the speed of implementing lessons learnt varies. I have requested more information

about this and the results of the Ffordd Gwynedd reviews across Council Departments, especially those dealing with children and vulnerable adults.

- 3.21 The original Ffordd Gwynedd Strategy published in October 2015 has now ended. Following consultation on a new draft plan, the newly revised Strategy will be put before the Cabinet for consideration in the near future.

4 PERFORMANCE

- 4.1 In addition to the work described above on projects relating to the Council's Plan, the remaining projects of the Corporate Support Department and Legal Service are described below. Furthermore, a full report on the performance measures associated with my portfolio can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 The development of **Self Service** on the Council's website is vitally important to enable Gwynedd residents to gain 24 hour, seven days a week access to information, and provide a more cost effective way of contacting the Council for services. By using this method, Gwynedd residents have so far enabled the Council to avoid costs of £63,580.
- 4.3 The numbers of self-service accounts continue to increase and 36,197 accounts had been created by the end of October 2018 - 24% more accounts than in October 2017. The numbers logging on to their accounts every month are also on the increase, compared to previous years. Every new service introduced since October 2016 has seen the number of its on-line requests increasing, with the exception of Refuse and Bulky Waste Collection complaints. We will work to increase the numbers in future. We will also work to increase the numbers that download 'apGwynedd' from the App Store and Google Play.
- 4.4 A significant development since November 2018 is that residents are now able to report problems about our highways via self-service, e.g. pot-holes or obstruction on the road, problems with signs. We have changed our highways officers' way of working; and, since they now carry portable equipment in order to record their work, an update can be provided as soon as a problem is resolved, as long as the original complaint was submitted through self-service.
- 4.5 The Council's Communication and Engagement Service is responsible for the content of the **Council's website**. Between July and October 2018, 657,644 individuals used the Council's website. 652 (0.09%) gave their opinion about the website, of which 479 (76%) scored it a 5 out of 5. Of the 155 (24%) who gave a score of less than 5 out of 5, 91 gave a comment or complaint. There were more complaints during this time, mainly because of the problems with the Council website's servers over the summer, and this is understandable. Nevertheless, the service acts promptly to resolve complaints and 73% of complaints were resolved within three working days, an increase on the performance between April and July. Only one complaint remains open and this is the need to add a public footpaths layer

to the on-line map, but we are working to resolve problems relating to linguistic matters. Further information about the measures are found in Appendix 1.

- 4.6 Another aspect of the **Communication and Engagement Service's** work is the sharing of information about the Council's work in the press, and its response to requests by the press for information and comment. In my previous report I asked the Service about the ways in which the impact of the Council's public statements could be measured. Over the four months between July and the end of October, the Council published 76 proactive press releases, and these led directly to the publication of 246 positive news articles or items. I am eager for the Service to continue to publish news about the successful and effective work for which the Council is responsible, in order that Gwynedd residents find out how we operate, and the difference this makes to their lives.
- 4.7 During the previous period, the Service was busy engaging with the people of Gwynedd as it began planning for finding further savings. Thanks are due to the 2,553 individuals and organisations who completed the 'The Priorities of the People of Gwynedd: Which services are important to you?' questionnaire. I expect the work of engaging with the people of Gwynedd about the effect of the financial situation facing us to continue or increase in future.
- 4.8 Since my previous report in September, the Research and Analysis Service and the Information Management Service have merged, and the purpose of the new **Research and Information Service** is to 'Help every member of staff to manage information on paper or electronically and uphold information laws, develop the Council's ability and that of its partners to use information and evidence in order to make the best decisions for the people of Gwynedd.'
- 4.9 There were two 'information breaches' (where information about an individual had been stolen/lost/sent to the wrong address) between July and the end of October. One case was the result of a software glitch associated with our website, and we are collaborating on a solution with the Information Technology Service to ensure that it does not happen again. The second case involved posting information to the wrong person. Arrangements have since been tightened in order to ensure it does not happen again. We must bear in mind, however, that the number of data breaches have fallen compared to the previous period, and only one was sufficiently serious to be reported to the Information Commissioner's Office. Further information about the measures are found in Appendix 1.
- 4.10 The Service has been involved with the work of analysing the results of the 'Priorities of the People of Gwynedd: Which Services are Important to You?' questionnaires. This work is vitally important as we Councillors weigh up which services Gwynedd Council will be able to provide in future in light of the difficult financial situation we face. Furthermore, a great deal of research is in the pipeline in several different fields that could help us as Councillors and officers to plan services in future, e.g. trends in the numbers

and costs of childcare, child protection systems and new housing developments.

- 4.11 **Galw Gwynedd and Siopau Gwynedd Services** provide our customers with prompt and accurate assistance to gain access the Council's services by providing answers, guidance and a service. Over the previous period, I'm glad to report that the average time taken for Galw Gwynedd to answer a phone call fell from 53 seconds to 40 seconds. The number of calls reaching Galw Gwynedd has also fallen and, if this trend continues, the Service will look into introducing webchat in the near future. The work I have just described within the Self-service project has freed up time at Galw Gwynedd and Siopau Gwynedd ensure a swifter response to telephone and face-to-face enquiries.
- 4.12 In enquiring into customer satisfaction with the service provided by **Siopau Gwynedd**, 4.29% of the total gave a score of less than 10. The Service is aware of this and is endeavouring to resolve problems that have arisen with a shortage of parking spaces for visitors to the Siop Gwynedd in Pwllheli and staffing matters at Siop Gwynedd in Dolgellau.
- 4.13 A similar percentage - 4% - of customers of the Registration Service had given a satisfaction score of less than 10. The Service is currently reviewing its internal processes in order to make further improvements. We must bear in mind, however, that there are factors beyond our control, such as problems with a shortage of parking spaces at Ysbyty Gwynedd for attending Registration appointments.
- 4.14 I am very eager that the **Health, Safety and Well-being Service** continue to press forward with its business model whereby Managers manage health and safety within their own services. Experts in the Health, Safety and Well-being Service offer intensive support and training for Managers, but every Manager must take seriously his/her responsibilities and be accountable for the health and safety of staff and the public. As a Council we will further review the procedures within each Department in order to ensure that these responsibilities are fully implemented.
- 4.15 Having challenged the performance of the **Legal Service** I am satisfied with the progress of the work and congratulate the Service for once more succeeding in maintaining the LEXCEL standard. This is the recognised standard of the Law Society for "Excellence in legal practice management and client care".
- 4.16 Of course, only the main performance matters are noted above. Whilst I have held detailed discussions on various other matters within the various units, I am satisfied that the performance of those other units are within the range of expected performance.

5 FINANCIAL POSITION / SAVINGS

5.1 All the savings plans for 2018/19 have been realised; yet, the Corporate Support Department and Legal Service, as the rest of the Council, are seeking opportunities to make further savings from April 2019 onward.

6 NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

6.1 None to note.

7 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

7.1 Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. Monitoring Officer:

No observations in relation to propriety.

ii. Head of Finance Department:

Nothing to add to the report from a financial propriety perspective.

7.2 Views of the Local Member:

7.2.1 Not a local matter.

7.3 Results of Any Consultation:

7.3.1 None to note.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Performance Measures