

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to a meeting of the Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting: 4 October, 2022
Cabinet Member: Councillor Menna Jones
Contact Officer: Geraint Owen
Contact Number: 01286 679072
Subject: CHALLENGE PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SUPPORT AND LEGAL

THE DECISION SOUGHT

To accept and note the information in the report.

THE REASON WHY A DECISION IS NEEDED

In order to ensure effective performance management

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on what has been happening in the areas for which I am responsible as Cabinet Member for Corporate Support and Legal. This includes outlining the latest developments against pledges within the 2018-2023 Gwynedd Council Plan; the progress of performance measures; and the latest on the savings and cuts plans.
- 1.2 I wish to remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised by myself at a meeting of the Corporate Support Department's Management Team on 13 September, which also included representatives from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 I am satisfied that the projects being led by the Department, along with the day-to-day performance, are undertaken within the budget. I wish to note my appreciation of the work of all the officers of the Department and to recognise the key contribution they make to support the work of the Council.

CORPORATE SUPPORT

2. PROJECTS OF THE GWYNEDD COUNCIL PLAN 2018-2023 [Improvement Priorities]

The Corporate Support Department is leading on nine of the improvement priorities, which appear in the Council Plan for this year. I summarise what has been achieved thus far as follows:



2.1 KEEPING THE BENEFIT LOCAL

- 2.1.1 The Council is responsible for procuring, or purchasing, a number of goods and services and is eager to try to ensure that local businesses can compete and win these contracts in order to ensure that as much of the Council's expenditure as possible remains local.
- 2.1.2. Over the past 18 months, a great deal of work has been done to maximise social benefits when procuring. The work of the tender assessment trial plan based on social value is coming to an end, with the third and final pilot tender currently being evaluated. A report has been drafted recommending the way forward with the intention to receive the seal of approval in the autumn.
- 2.1.3 Work has been undertaken to support local businesses to respond to the requirements of the Well-being Act and climate measures in tenders, as well as assessing tenders based on social value. In addition, the Care Contract has now been awarded with officers collaborating with providers to establish the new model of working and addressing employment matters.

2.2 WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

- 2.2.1 The aim of this project is to boost the number of women who apply for and attain senior positions within the Council by reviewing the employment conditions and the work environment to attract more women to undertake the work in future. The project group has responded by submitting a Developing Potential Programme for women in the Council. The first series of the Developing Programme ended on 4 July. The feedback received has been very positive and the second series will be offered during the autumn months.
- 2.2.2 From the outset, considerable emphasis has been placed on raising the awareness and understanding of men who are managers and leaders within the Council. An event was held for men in the organisation on 28 June. It was a very successful event where there was an opportunity for men to listen to and question female and male leaders who were able to share experiences and highlight the barriers faced by women in the workplace and possible solutions to those barriers.
- 2.2.3 The “teatime talks” for female Elected Members and officers within the Council continue, with facilitators and in-house and external guest speakers scheduled for the next phase.
- 2.2.4 As we proceed to the next steps of the project, consideration will be given to develop the use of data and statistics to measure the project's success.



2.3 ENSURING FAIRNESS FOR EVERYONE

- 2.3.1 In order to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do, we must first identify any barriers that some people face when looking for, or receiving services from the Council.
- 2.3.2 The work of updating the equality e-module, which is one of the mandatory e-modules, has been completed with 403 individuals completing it between April and August 2022. Consideration will be given to develop specialist on-line sessions for specific front-line employees. Following the election, equality training was provided to Members and further sessions will be offered in the Autumn.
- 2.3.3 The work of analysing the public equality engagement has been completed with the vast majority of respondents stating that they had not faced any obstacles due to their protected characteristics when contacting the Council. The rest raises a number of matters that need to be addressed and this work is ongoing with relevant Services.
- 2.3.4 There was some further delay in the work of preparing a new electronic Equality Impact Assessment but it is hoped that it will be ready for use in the coming weeks. In the meantime, an interim template is used.
- 2.3.5 A decision has been made to apply for an "Inclusive Employers" accreditation. The application will be submitted by 16 December and it is expected to receive the result of the assessment and feedback report in March 2023.

2.4 NATIVE WELSH PLACE NAMES

- 2.4.1 As you are aware, there is concern that native Welsh place names are disappearing from the landscape of Gwynedd as a result of a lack of use of Welsh names and an increase in renaming places in English. The project prioritises the fields to address and also considers what could be done in terms of Council buildings, street names, place names etc.
- 2.4.2 A phase 2 (year 2) work programme has been drawn up and is being implemented. However, there has been deviation from the work programme recently as research was undertaken at the request of the Leadership Team to examine potential changes to street names in the county.
- 2.4.3 A number of new clauses have been added to the Council's Welsh Language Policy, as part of wider reviewing work, to reflect the guidance of the Leadership Team and the Council's desire and commitment to use the Welsh name of the Council and Welsh place names on a broader lever wherever possible. The Welsh Language Policy will be submitted to the Cabinet and Full Council in due course.



- 2.4.4 A workshop was developed and held for staff (specifically building control, language team) on providing advice on naming houses in order to disseminate expertise in the field.
- 2.4.5 In light of a public response to changing names on maps, discussions have been held with Ordnance Survey officers to discuss obstacles, to understand their current processes and to establish a working relationship. An action plan will be created to influence names that appear on maps. Meetings are also being held with Welsh Government officers and the Welsh Language Commissioner to discuss collaboration opportunities.

2.5 PROMOTING THE USE OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE WITHIN THE COUNCIL'S SERVICES

- 2.5.1 The Council has been prominent in terms of ensuring that services for residents are available through the medium of Welsh as we operate through the medium of Welsh internally. Promoting the use of the Welsh language within Council services is continuous work, and we are aware of the need to continue to maintain our staff's language skills.
- 2.5.2 Language training continues with a number of staff taking advantage of internal and external opportunities. Work to promote courses and opportunities to develop language skills is undertaken continuously and work is underway to find suitable courses for front-line staff and to arrange commissioned courses.
- 2.5.3 Work has commenced on gathering assessments from service managers for staff without a language assessment in the Economy and Community Department (the majority are casual and seasonal staff). Priority has been given to contact all front-line services across the Council regarding language training and this will take place as soon as possible.

It is recognised that this work has been embedded and is now part of day-to-day work and arrangements are underway to complete the project with the remaining departments by December 2022.

2.6 THE WELSH LANGUAGE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

- 2.6.1 The purpose of this project by the Welsh Language Sub-group (Public Services Board) is to encourage the people of Gwynedd to speak Welsh when they come into reception areas (at the Council and other partners). A company was commissioned to create an assessment of the public's language choice when using services in 12 traditional receptions in Gwynedd and Anglesey and to look into possible interventions in order to encourage more people to use our services through the medium of Welsh.

The focus of the project is on the use made of services available in Welsh, and not on the availability of services where they should be available by default.



- 2.6.2 The *laith Cyf.* company was appointed and observation work was carried out at the receptions in May and June. Focus groups with participating staff were held by the *laith* company in July. Recommendations have been drawn up to try to encourage more use of the Welsh language by the public, and a resources pack and guidelines for staff have been developed; staff of public organisations are encouraged to use the new resources. The findings of the observation, recommendations, resources pack and development guidelines will be submitted to members of the Welsh Language Sub-group at their next meeting.
- 2.6.3 It is anticipated that the work of this specific project will be completed by December 2022.

2.7 ENSURING THAT MANAGERS PRACTISE THEIR HEALTH AND SAFETY ROLE EFFECTIVELY

- 2.7.1 This project has been identified as a corporate priority for the first time in this year's Council Plan.
- 2.7.2 The Health, Safety and Well-being field is now scrutinised in a way that has never been seen before, and for several reasons. Clearly, the pandemic brought our safety to the forefront of all our minds, and keeping everyone safe is one of the Council's most fundamental expectations by the people of Gwynedd.
- 2.7.3 Officers have collaborated with the Systems Project Officer of the Human Resources Department to map processes to refer individuals to the Occupational Health Unit and the system to report accidents to the Health and Safety Unit. This is about being clear of our needs as a Council to go out to procure purpose-built external systems.
- 2.7.4 Following a full review of training requirements, IOSH face-to-face training for Managers continues and it will restart from 7.9.22 and a number of courses have been programmed before Christmas in an attempt to catch up with the situation that has slipped for two years. A number of refresher courses have also been programmed in order to ensure that everyone's training is up-to-date.
- 2.7.5 A training session on 'Safe Leadership' will be arranged before Christmas for the Council's Management Team. Training for Elected Members has been reviewed to include an element on their personal safety as members.
- 2.7.6 A new Occupational Health Advisor has been appointed to the Health, Safety and Well-being team and two nurses have been registered on a Train the Trainer course to be able to present the I-act mental health management course. It is hoped to reach a situation where every Manager has attended a course on how to manage and support their staff's mental health.
- 2.7. In order to complete the Health and Safety Policy that has been under review, a conversation regarding internal health and safety governance structures was held with the Chief Executive, and further work needs to be undertaken on the different

terms of reference of internal groups that existed pre-COVID in order to present them to him, to ensure that sufficient monitoring on the appropriate level is carried out.

2.8 WORKFORCE PLANNING

- 2.8.1 The work of identifying gaps and acting pro-actively is a priority that has emerged more than ever recently and there is a need to respond to the staffing challenges facing many services across the Council. A specific work programme and milestones have been formulated to identify short, medium and long-term gaps.
- 2.8.2 Work has commenced on creating content for a dedicated Careers website. The intention is for the website to be used as the main hub to attract applicants for jobs. Also, it is intended to further extend and trial the use of alternative application forms, that are simpler, in some specific work fields.
- 2.8.3 When moving forward, every opportunity will be taken to try to make the best and most effective use of staff we currently have, by highlighting opportunities for additional working hours available for part-time staff, in different fields, if they wish to increase their hours.
- 2.8.4 A formal system will be introduced to have conversations / exit interviews with staff in order to better understand why individuals are leaving the Council's employment. The relevant documents have already been produced and trialled within the Corporate Support Department. Using such a system will enable us to understand why individuals are leaving the Council's employment.
- 2.8.5 The Apprenticeships Scheme and the graduate scheme continue to make good progress and is recognised across the Council and beyond. Recently, 10 new apprentices and 4 new professional trainees were welcomed to the Council within fields such as information technology, child care, engineering, finance, law, events management and equality and diversity. From September onwards, there will be 20 apprentices and 14 professional trainees on our schemes. A campaign to identify opportunities and recruit for apprentice and professional trainee jobs for 2023 will commence from October onwards.
- 2.8.6 A report will be drawn up on the new Work Experience Scheme for 2023.

2.9 IMPLEMENTING *FFORDD GWYNEDD*

- 2.9.1 As a Council, it is our responsibility to ensure that it is the needs of the people of Gwynedd that steer how we offer the services that we provide. In doing so, we should avoid any unnecessary working arrangements.
- 2.9.2 Every Department has held a self-assessment of their progress in the context of the culture of *Ffordd Gwynedd* during the last quarter of 2021/22. The responses have been analysed and approved as a basis for a new Three Year Plan to develop the organisation and the culture within the Council. A Three Year Plan and a *Ffordd*



Gwynedd Work Programme for 2022-25 will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval during Autumn 2022.

- 2.9.3 *Ffordd Gwynedd* Advisors and the Organisation's Learning and Development Teams continue to provide advice and training for the purpose of holding service reviews for many service units/departments. During October / November, two awareness raising sessions about '*Ffordd Gwynedd*' will be held with Elected Members.
- 2.9.4 The new reporting and performance challenging arrangements have been introduced with the first challenge meetings under the new system held in June/July while meetings for the rest of the year have been scheduled. Representatives of Scrutiny Committee members, along with shadowing Cabinet Members, will join the Cabinet Member at two of the five performance challenge meetings during the year. The success of the new performance challenge arrangements will be reviewed after a one-year cycle.
- 2.9.5 A new-look Managers' Network has been relaunched with arrangements in place to hold the next series of face to face meetings during the Autumn this year.

3. PERFORMANCE

3.1 An overview of the Department's performance during the financial year to date is noted below. Not all services are referred to but I am eager to confirm that I am satisfied with the current performance of those services not referred to here.

3.2 Human Resources

3.2.1 Absence levels have returned to pre-Covid levels. The number of Covid cases is partly responsible for the current levels. Attention is given to monitor the level of absences with an Absences Group formed to monitor the situation. The group meets regularly and gives specific attention to find reasons for absences and to offer support for managers within various departments and services within the Council.

3.3 Customer Contact and Registration

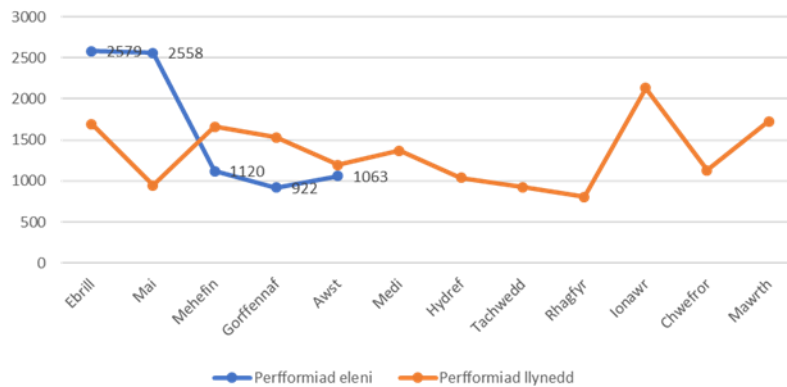
3.3.1 Over the past two years, the Customer Contact and Registration Service has coped well under difficult circumstances with officers under pressures in light of vacant posts.

3.3.2 Over the past few months, action has been taken to strengthen service capacity and staffing levels now correspond to what has been identified for the service structure. There are also plans in the pipeline to recruit apprentices and to advertise casual posts within the service. However, it must be noted that there is much work to be done in terms of training new staff and that there will be a few months yet before a performance improvement.



- 3.3.3 The number of missed calls was lower during the last quarter and this follows the appointment of two new staff members who mainly deal with phone-calls, which shows that recent recruitment is starting to make a difference. Work has commenced with the IT Service to identify missed calls so that it is possible to collaborate with services to improve the standard of service for customers.

(Number of missed calls every month)



- 3.3.4 As the staffing situation stabilises, it is hoped to increase the use of web chat and identify what other aspects of self-service would be beneficial to the customer in order to increase the use of web chat.

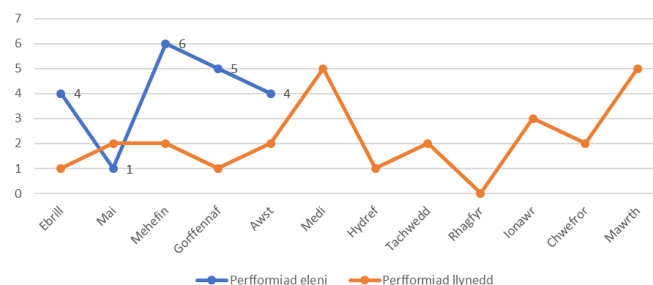
3.4 Democracy and Language

- 3.4.1 The journey of establishing the language initiative independently in the community is gaining momentum and a Lead Group has been formed to lead the work. The aim is to launch the new-look initiative at the *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol* in Llŷn and Eifionydd in 2023.
- 3.4.2 Before the summer period, *Hunaniaith* managed to secure a grant of £12,000 from a Welsh Government Fund. By receiving grant funding, it was possible to arrange and hold a number of activities for children and young people, aged between 11 and 25, across the county as part of 'Haf o Hwyl'. The activities were very popular and there are further schemes in the pipeline to hold activities for refugees who have settled in Gwynedd.

3.5 Research and Information

- 3.5.1 Incidents of personal information being disclosed in error, or inadvertently, continue to occur in places within the Council, with five incidents occurring in July and a further four in August. A proportion (about half of them) continues to be e-mails that were sent to the wrong address. The Information Governance Panel will consider a paper from a Task and Finish Group, which has been exploring e-mail security and the technical possibilities to make errors less likely to happen. Work is also being done to examine arrangements to govern electronic information and the level of resources available by the Council in a rapidly developing field.

(Number of information incidents)



3.5.2 The Research and Information Service has also started to monitor and report monthly on the percentage of freedom of information requests that were responded to within 20 working days. Currently, it appears that the pattern varies slightly every month, the situation will have to be monitored and see what pattern will develop over a period of time.

3.6 Health, Safety and Well-being

3.6.1 Over the past two years, following national guidance from HSE (*Health and Safety Executive*), the statutory health surveillance work was temporarily suspended. By now, instruction has been received to recommence health surveillance and, therefore, the work receives high priority by the Occupational Health Service due to the need to catch up since Covid. Consequently, the waiting time for an appointment with occupational health advisors has increased to 6 weeks. However, a new nurse has been appointed and has recently joined the team and can help with some elements of the workload and is awaiting specialist training in order to contribute towards the health surveillance work. I feel that the situation will require monitoring in order to ensure that waiting time will not become a long-term problem.

4. FINANCIAL POSITION/SAVINGS

4.1.1 The Human Resources Advisory Service has a savings target of £80,000 to realise. Schemes to realise this saving are on the right track and the saving amount will have been realised by the end of the financial year.

LEGAL SERVICES

GWYNEDD COUNCIL PLAN PROJECTS 2018-2023

PROPRIETY

Contribute to the work of establishing the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (“CJC”)



The Monitoring Officer acts as the Monitoring officer of the CJC which includes functions akin to that of the Head of Democratic Services. The Statutory Instruments for establishing and administering the CJC have been coming into force over a period of time with some aspects to be finalised. This has involved providing specialist advice on constitutional and governance of the CJC , In addition to providing this support initial constitutional document have been drafted and the work of developing a Constitution continues,

Working with the Standards Committee to respond to the review of the ethical framework stemming from the report of Mr Richard Penn.

Following the publication of the Richard Penn report the response of the Government to the recommendations which include local resolution arrangements, training and the inter relationship with Town and Community Councils. In the meantime, the Standards Committee has initiated work researching into the form of support which Town and Community Councils would wish to receive. However , the actions which the Government intends to implement are key to establishing the next steps and have the discussion about resourcing requirements.

Providing induction arrangements and training Council and Town and Community Councils on the Code of Conduct following the local elections.

Training on the Code of Conduct was provided as part of the induction sessions and 65 members received that initial training. This work continues with a more detailed course being provided on two occasions. It is intended to hold more sessions to meet demand. A training course has been prepared for Town and Community Councils which can be provided remotely and it is intended to imitate a programme as soon as resources permit.

ELECTIONS

Supporting the Returning Officer to arrange the Local Elections in May 2022

Local Elections were held in May 2022 and the Electoral Commission provided positive feedback as to the arrangements. A review of the arrangements and a work plan will be prepared and the performance in this election has underlined the value of this approach.

Responding to the extension and amendment of the franchise, specifically for electors aged 16-18 which came into effect following the Elections and Senedd (Wales) Act 2019 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

During 2021-2022 by investing in staff and a programme of direct communication we succeeded in securing the registration of 70% of 16-18 electors for the May elections. This included working with School's, Colleges and the Youth Service and other bodies to promote registration as well as a campaign of direct communication. In addition this enabled us to gain an understanding and information about what worked and communication methods as well as contacts in establishments which can be developed and used in future.



CORONER

Deal with the appointment of a Senior Coroner for the area as well as establishing the area on a sustainable basis.

The arrangements for appointing a permanent Senior Coroner have been started. The arrangements were approved by the Cabinet before the election. Confirmation of the documentation and a recruitment timetable has been established. is awaited form the Department of Justice. A discussion in relation to the support requirements can be initiated following the appointment.

PERFORMANCE

LEGAL SERVICE

Feedback form legal service users is sought as a matter of course. The current target is the percentage of questionnaires which core the service received at 10/10. At this point the 100% of questionnaires received have scored the service at10/10. However, the number of questionnaires being returned if very low(4) . Following on from this we have undertaken a comprehensive review of the system . This information is important to us not only as score but also to provide and opinion and a complete picture of the services received. As part of the new arrangements we will sending simpler questionnaires but also taking proactive steps to seek the opinions across the Departments which receive our services.

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

OBSERVATIONS - MONITORING OFFICER

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

OBSERVATIONS - HEAD OF FINANCE

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of the Corporate Support Department.

