

CYNGOR GWYNEDD – Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

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|--------------------------|---|
| Title of Item: | Annual Report - Employment |
| Cabinet Member: | Cllr. Menna Trenholme |
| Relevant Officer: | Eurig Williams (Manager – Human Resources Service) |
| Date of Meeting: | 10 October 2023 |

1. Decision Sought:

Approval of the annual report for 2022/23.

2. What is the reason the Cabinet needs to take a decision:

To reflect on the corporate strategy for the future in this key area.

3. Introduction and rationale

3.1 Background / Introduction

This report is a summary of the main activities relating to employment within the Council during 2022/23. The information also provides a general overview of the workforce's profile and provides comment on how this guides aspects of the staffing strategy.

3.1 The rationale and justification for recommending the decision.

The Councils workforce

The table below provides the numbers employed on a full-time and part-time basis within the Council for the last three years. These numbers include staff who work in our schools but not those staff employed on a casual basis during holiday/sickness periods of the permanent workforce.

| | 31/3/21 | 31/3/22 | 31/3/23 |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Full time | 3,073 | 3,258 | 3,306 |
| Part time | 2,776 | 2,650 | 2,689 |
| Total | 5,849 | 5,908 | 5,995 |

You will note that there was a further increase in the number of staff during 2022/23; a further 48 individuals were employed on full-time contracts, whilst there was an

increase of 39 individuals on part-time contract, therefore providing us with a total of 5,995 staff members. Whilst the reasons for increases can be numerous, it should be remembered that there are constant attempts to recruit to certain key areas; this would certainly contribute to this increase.

Workforce split by gender.

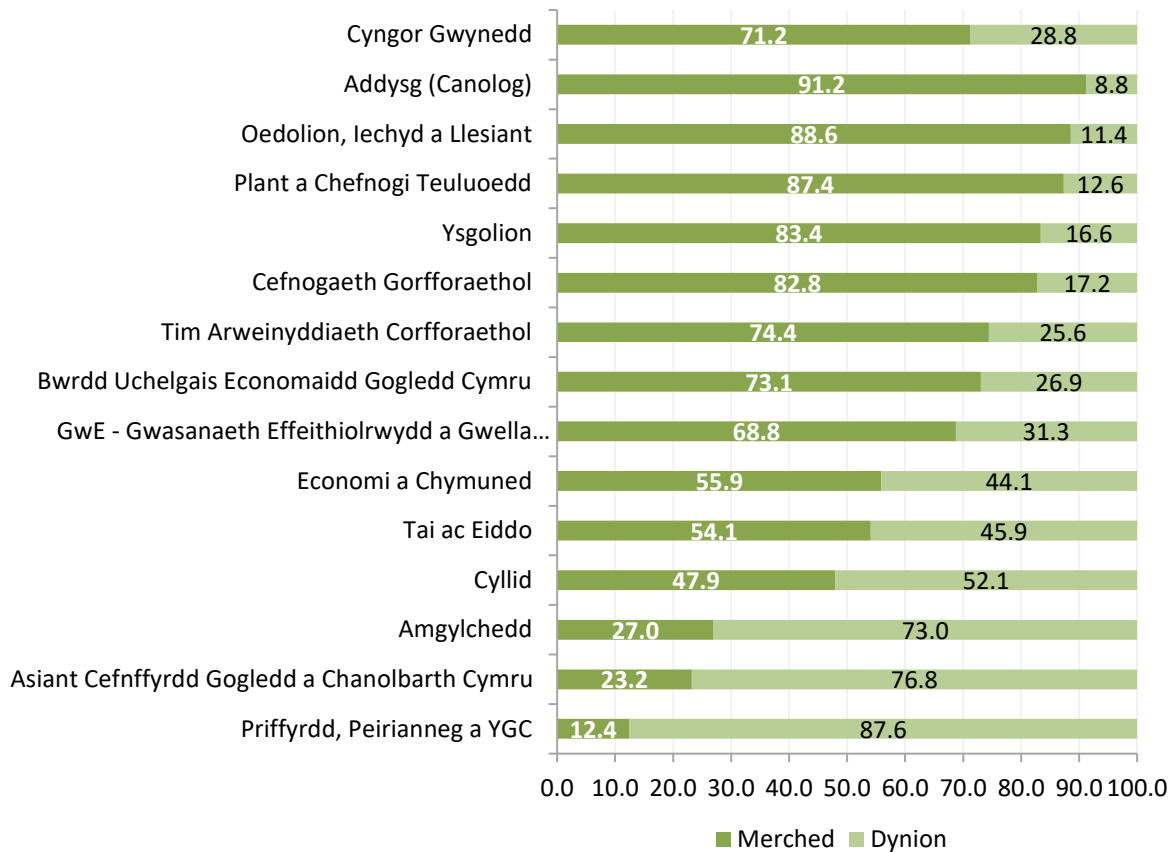
A further analysis is seen here of the number of people employed on a full-time and part-time basis during the same period. The key message is the fact that there is a significant higher number of females working for the Council, with a significant higher number of those individuals working on a part-time basis.

| | | 31/3/21 | 31/3/22 | 31/3/23 |
|-----------|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Full-time | Men | 1,336 | 1,434 | 1,462 |
| | Women | 1,737 | 1,824 | 1,844 |
| Part-time | Men | 314 | 280 | 264 |
| | Women | 2,462 | 2,370 | 2,425 |
| | | | | |
| Total | Men | 1,650 | 1,714 | 1,726 |
| | Women | 4,199 | 4,194 | 4,269 |
| Total % | Men | 28.2% | 29.0% | 28.8% |
| | Women | 71.8% | 71.0% | 71.2% |

Further, the following provides an analysis of the split between men and women within the Council’s departments on the 31st of March 2023.

Distribution of female / male Gwynedd Council staff per Department, 31 March

2023



Age profile of Council staff

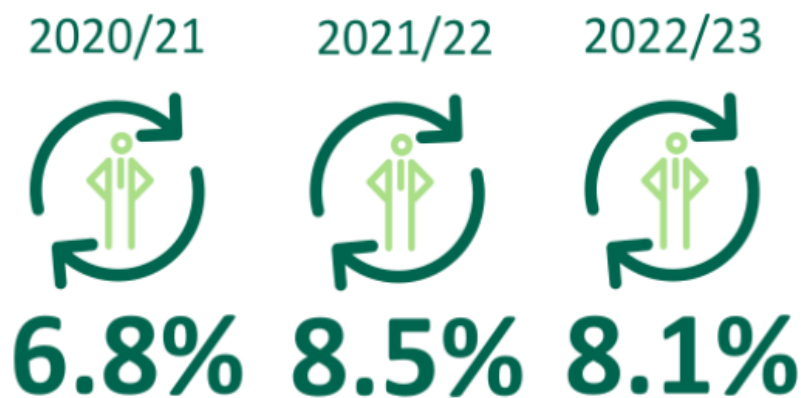
Last year, we reported that the age profile consistently shows that 65% of our staff members are aged over 40, whilst 40% are aged over 50. There is reference to staff turnover later in this report and the fact that the number of staff leaving the Council is consistent, but we cannot avoid the risk that in the future we will lose skills and experience, if the majority of those individuals aged over 40 and 50 leave the Council within a short time of each other. In addressing this risk, workforce planning is a key corporate priority for this Council, which over time will look to ensure that we have plans in place to respond to such situations. This is a long-term task of course, but it's crucial for maintaining the effectiveness of services in the future. One example of addressing this issue is the continuous efforts to invest and recruit apprentices and profession trainees, but this alone cannot change the situation, and

the work programme is seeking to change and modernise other elements of the Council's recruitment arrangements.

A detailed age profile at a departmental level is attached in Appendix 1.

Staff turnover

During 2020/21 (the first year of the pandemic), there was a reduction in the number of people who were leaving the Council's employment. The reason for that was clearly connected to the circumstances at the time, with people reluctant to leave the employer (6.8%) in a period of uncertainty. The percentage of 8.1% for last year remains lower than other sectors of the economy, but there is possibly a connection between this stability with the age profile of the workforce that we referred to earlier; there is a risk in the long term that this percentage will increase in the future with an increase in retirements.



There was again in 2022/23 a variation in the turnover rates within individual departments. The lowest rates were within Corporate Support (6.1%), Highways, Engineering and YGC (6.3%) and Housing and Property (6.6%). The highest rates were within Economy and Community (28.7%), Leadership Team and Legal Service (11.6%), Adults, Health, and Well-being (11.2%) and the Environment Department (6.6%).

Measuring turnover, and understanding the reasons behind those rates, is complicated with all manner of reasons possible as to why figures are different within teams and departments. To highlight the issue, it was reported last year that the Corporate Support Department was amongst the departments that had experienced the highest rates of turnover, but by 2022/23 it seems that the situation has stabilised. So as to understand

more about why people leave, we have now introduced exit questionnaires and interview procedures. Over time, we hope that the information gathered will help us to understand the reasons why individuals leave the Council's employment.

Sickness Absence

The following is a simple table that shows the rate of sickness absence amongst the workforce over the past four years, which is shown as the number of days lost to sickness per head during the year in question.

| 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 9.78 | 6.35 | 10.07 | 10.22 |

There was a slight increase again in the number of days lost to sickness, to 10.22 days per head during 2022/23. Apart from the first year of the pandemic, this is in keeping with the general direction of an increase in rates over a number of years. Whilst this rate is higher than what should be expected, we can provide some context to the situation. There were only three other authorities in Wales who had a lower rate than Cyngor Gwynedd during 2022/23, those being Dinbych, Penfro and Ynys Môn. There were numerous authorities that reported that their absence rates were well over 10 days per head, with one council reporting a rate of 15.45 days per head on average. To try and understand more about this problem, and improve the situation here in Gwynedd, we have been in discussions with some of those authorities to try and understand the reasons for their rates and to gauge what we can learn from their respective approaches. However, it must be remembered that there are vast differences in the make-up of workforces across authorities in Wales; for instance, not every authority directly employs staff working in refuse collection and care, both areas which historically has found it challenging to manage sickness absence, very often for understandable reasons. We are also seeking to co-ordinate an approach across the whole Council, including understanding more about the costs to departments who are experiencing high levels.

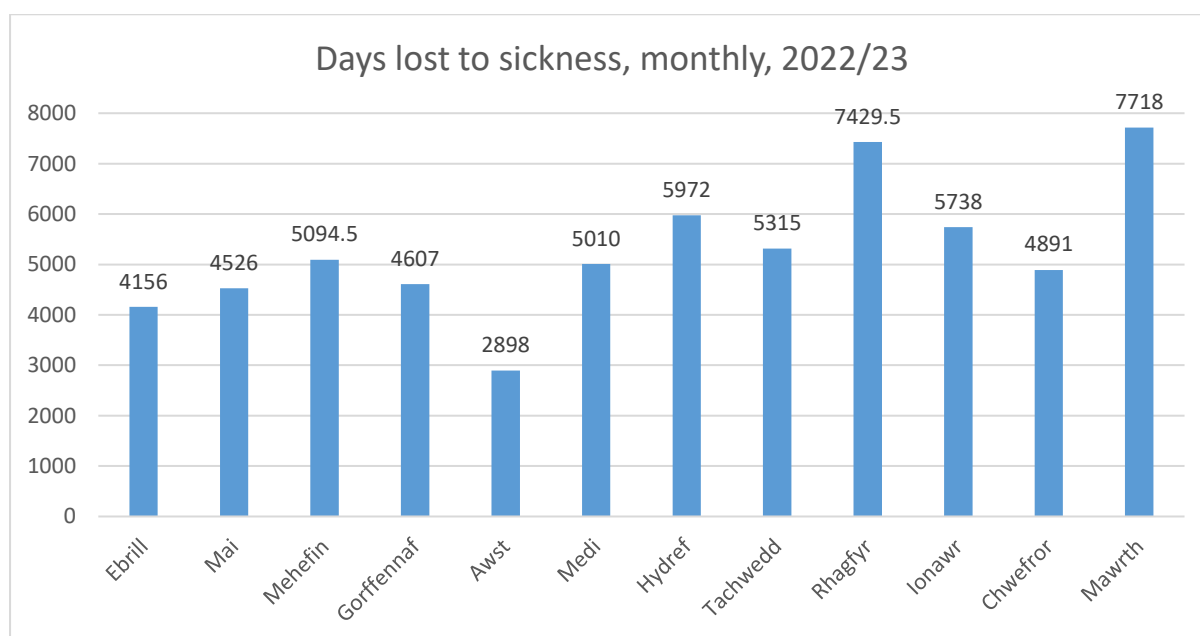
Having provided some general comments about the statistics and the related costs to the organisation, it is important to remember that this is a subject that concerns people, and very often people who suffer with long term conditions. Our priority, therefore, as HR and

Health and Safety Services, and front-line services, is to support our staff to improve their health and well-being in general.

The following provides the split in terms of short-term and long-term sickness. Long-term sickness is defined as twenty-eight continuous days of sickness.

| | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Long-term | 62% | 71% | 57% | 53% |
| Short-term | 38% | 29% | 43% | 47% |

The following provides a breakdown with regards to long-term and short-term sickness absence. Long-term absence is defined as 28 days or more of continuous absence.



The following table shows the average number of days lost per head within individual departments.

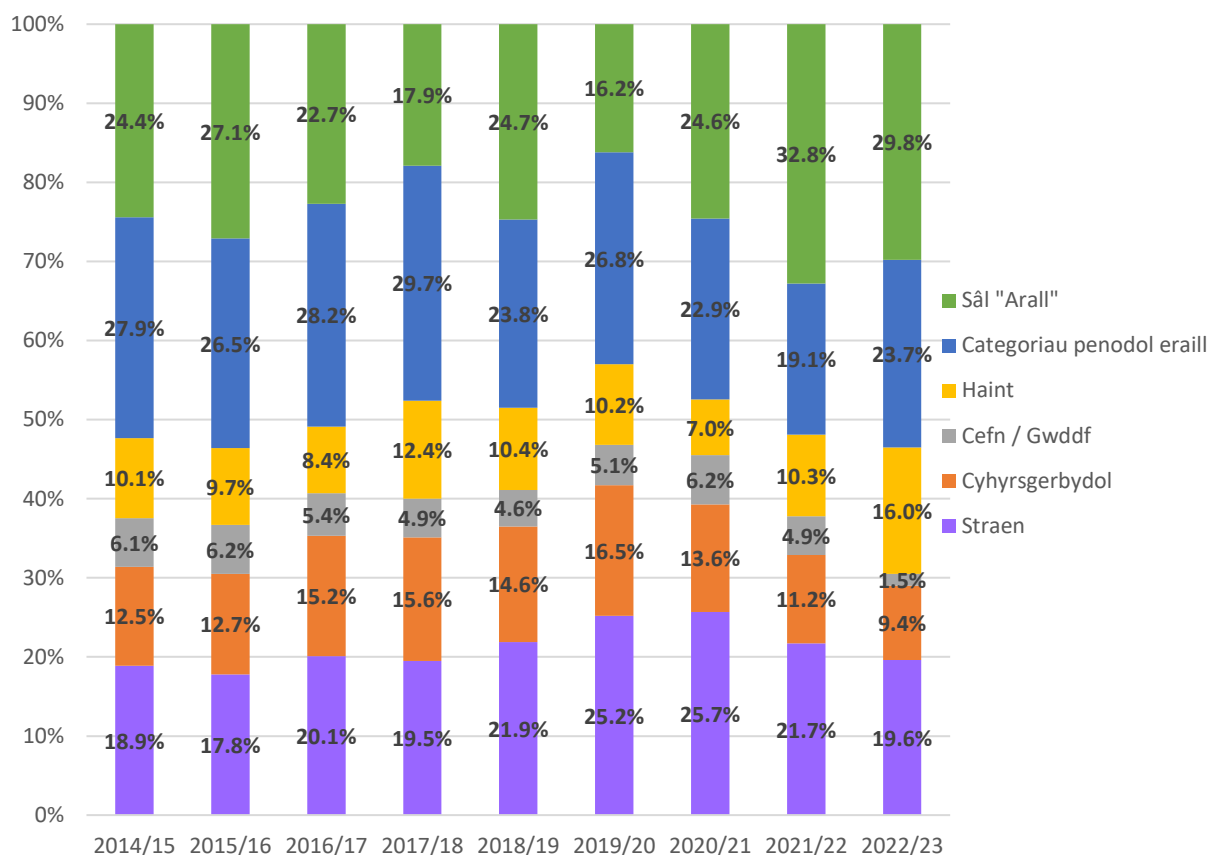
| Department | Days |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Education – Central | 6.98 |
| Education – Schools | 9.61 |
| Environment | 11.93 |
| Corporate Support | 9.19 |
| Finance | 8.30 |
| Economy and Community | 8.92 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Adult, Health, and Well-being | 17.04 |
| Children and Supporting Children | 6.58 |
| Highways and Engineering | 10.17 |
| Housing and Property | 5.53 |
| Leadership Team | 5.77 |
| YGC - Ymgynghoriaeth Gwynedd | 4.19 |
| Others | 7.59 |
| Total for the Council | 10.22 |

It is important to note that 38.4% of staff members did not report that they had been sick at all during 2022/23. This is lower than the figure of 43% for 2021/22, which again highlights our concerns that sickness absence is on the increase within the Council.

The following table analyses the type of sickness that was recorded over the past five years. This information is used to inform the discussion about the contents of the health and well-being programme.

Analysis on the basis of reason recorded for sickness absence, 2014/15 i 2022/23



Whilst there was a reduction, the percentage of sickness recorded as ‘Other’ remains a concern, mainly because it means that we are not aware of the reasons for the absence. Substantial work has been undertaken with managers to try and bring this rate down, but there is more to do. It’s also a positive note that there was a further reduction in the sickness recorded as stress, but when considering the levels of ‘other’ sickness we must persevere in working with service to ensure an accurate recording of sickness, that support and advice is provided to staff when they are ill, and also that proactive steps are taken to improve well-being in general.

Pay Structure and Pay Awards

The Pay Policy for 2022/23 was approved by the Council in its meeting on the 3rd of March 2022. During the following months, the National Joint Council for Local Government Workforce agreed on a pay increase for the 12 months to 31st of March 2023. The increase

was £1925 on every pay point, which was an increase of about 10% for those on the lowest pay point. This meant that the Council's minimum wage was £10.59.

In its meeting in March 2023, the Council, in adopting the budget, supported a proposal to finance a change in pay grade for staff working the care. There have been general concerns about pay rates in the care sector across Wales and indeed further afield, and further to reviewing job descriptions within this Council it became apparent that there was a case to finance a change in grades for certain roles. This change in job descriptions, and the decision of the Council on financing, meant that carers are now working on a higher grade, with the minimum wage for the role currently £11.18 per hour.

Ensuring equal pay between women and men has been one of the cornerstones of this Council's approach to employment for a number of years, and to ensure that our arrangements are robust, we do conduct a review of our pay systems roughly every three years. The latest audit was undertaken by an independent consultant during 2022/23. The consultant concluded that the Council's equal pay systems are robust under the relevant legislative requirements.

Workforce Planning

As previously mentioned in this report, the Council's ability to plan its staffing requirements in the mid to long term is one of its corporate priorities. Cyngor Gwynedd is not on its own in this respect; it is a priority for employers across the country. There was a reference earlier to the high-level statistics that feed into this work. This information is a good starting point for identifying our long-term workforce requirements. The aim of the long-term project in this area is to further develop the Council's ability to work proactively on its staffing requirements.

The pandemic has changed the employment market, and it overall it remains a market that favours those seeking employment rather than the employers. This means that there is a challenge to recruit staff, and whilst hybrid and online working is here to stay it means that there are more options for those seeking work in various fields. This can be a threat and an opportunity for us. Our efforts in workforce planning will need to take account of the ever-changing labour market.

One important aspect of workforce planning is the investment the Council provides to apprenticeships and trainee schemes, with the Talent and Apprenticeship Team within the Learning and Development Service at the forefront of those schemes.

Our intention is to recruit 20 apprentices and 6 professional trainees on an annual basis, which means that 65 individuals will be taking part in our Talent Schemes by September 2024. Since the introduction of the schemes in 2017, the Service has recruited and supported 87 individuals.

Apprentice Schemes:

The Scheme is considered as innovative within Wales's local authorities.

An initial £300,000 was invested in 2019 with a further £600,000 approved by the Cabinet in 2021.

- The Scheme has provided an opportunity for 55 apprenticeships since its commencement:
 - **28** apprentices currently on the scheme.
 - **27** individuals have completed their apprenticeships, with 70% appointed to a role with the Council.
- 7 of the current apprenticeships are degree level.
- A number of the 55 have been in priority areas in terms of recruitment, including the care sector, IT and Engineering.

Scheme for Tomorrow's Leaders and Specialists (graduate trainee scheme):

The Council invested an additional £500,000 into the Scheme in 2021:

- Since 2017, the Council has appointed 32 professional trainees:
 - **15** trainees currently on the Scheme
 - **17** professional trainees have completed the Scheme and are in roles with the Council.

- A number of priority areas have been addressed through professional trainees, including legal, planning and estate management.

It is expected that we will as an employer be recruiting 20 apprentices and 6 professional trainees on an annual basis, meaning that 65 individuals will be on our Talent Schemes by September 2024.

Hybrid Working Scheme

A few weeks ago, the Cabinet approved a scheme that has confirmed the flexible working arrangements that the Council will offer in relation to hybrid working. Adopting this scheme was the culmination of a period of testing flexible working arrangements in a number of service areas. The main emphasis is on ensuring that arrangements support service delivery. In addition, steps will be taken to amend the offices so that the best possible use is made of the facilities available to staff.

Recruiting and appointing

See below statistical details about the number of jobs advertised by the Council over the last five years together with the number of applications received and the number of vacancies which needed to be advertised again. Analysing these details again contributes to our ability to identify areas in which the Council needs to focus its attention in relation to developing expertise and planning the workforce for the future.

| Year | Number of jobs advertised | Number of applications | Number of jobs re-advertised | Number of applications following re-advertisement |
|-------------|---------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 2017 / 2018 | 472 | 2312 | 47 | 179 |
| 2018 / 2019 | 555 | 3281 | 57 | 240 |
| 2019 / 2020 | 586 | 2726 | 101 | 249 |
| 2020 / 2021 | 486 | 2112 | 77 | 227 |
| 2021 / 2022 | 515 | 2394 | 114 | 369 |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|------|------|-----|-----|
| 2022 / 2023* | 1054 | 3402 | 259 | 315 |
|-------------------------|------|------|-----|-----|

***Note that the figures for 2022/23 includes roles within our schools, thus explaining the sharp increase in numbers when comparing with previous years. The general conclusion is however that whilst some problems remain with recruiting staff, the situation has stabilised and improved over the past few months.**

We are taking steps to amend and improve our recruitment arrangements to develop and modernise the Council's image as an employer. For instance, we recently launched a new careers website.

3.3 Conclusions

The high-level information in this report enables managers and those officers advising them to plan services and identify in a timely manner those issues that require further investigation and implementation. The report also provides an overview of some of the steps that are being taken in certain key areas of employment. The main key messages are consistent with the long-term challenges that are facing the Council as an employer, those being:

- a) Workforce planning for the future.
- b) Continue to promote and support the health and well-being of our workforce.
- c) Embed our hybrid working scheme.

4. View of the statutory officers.

4.1 Chief Finance Officer

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of Gwynedd Council's employment situation in 2022/23. The Employment Annual Report contains useful and important information that will assist the Council in planning for future challenges, but adopting the decision sought would not create an additional spending commitment.

4.2 Monitoring Officer

The report provides an important overview of the staffing and employment situation in the Council. I have no further observations to add in relation to propriety.