

Isle of Anglesey County Council

Report to:	Executive
Date:	24/02/2026
Subject:	Allocation of up to £100k Funding from General Balances
Portfolio holder(s):	Councillor Robin Williams (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Business and Customer Experience)
Head of service / director:	Lynn Ball, Director of Function (Council Business) / Monitoring Officer
Report author:	Lynn Ball, Director of Function (Council Business) / Monitoring Officer
Local members:	Relevant to all Members

A – Recommendation(s) and reasons

Recommendations

1. To authorise the release of up to £100k from the Council's general balances to:
 - retain agency support to develop the specialisms of two solicitors who may shortly be appointed;
 - fund the continuing but temporary costs of agency support for clients, to ensure a smooth and safe transition back to internal legal provision in those routine areas of work;
 - retain the current Interim Data Protection Officer to ensure the delivery of an Information Governance Recovery and Improvement Programme, the revised and upgraded CRM, and the development of a new paralegal.
2. To delegate any further such requests to the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Business and Customer Experience, in consultation with the Director of Function (Resources) / Section 151 Officer.

Reasons

1. Among other areas, Council Business delivers an in-house legal service on routine local government work.
2. The team includes 11 employed solicitors.

3. 5 of these posts are currently vacant with a sixth post to become vacant from the beginning of April.
4. Historically, there were no retention issues in the team with occasional vacancies being filled, in the main, by those wishing to return to the local area.
5. However, since recent advances in remote working, the jobs market for solicitors has expanded considerably.
6. The wider private sector, and the rest of the public sector in Wales, are not fettered by the local government job evaluation scheme which now makes our solicitor salaries uncompetitive. Coupled with opportunities for fully remote working, some former staff and prospective candidates are now choosing to “live here and work there”.
7. In all, 41 recruitment attempts have been largely unsuccessful over a period of 20 months. This, despite multiple revisions of job descriptions/person specifications, re-evaluation of posts, promotion of the Council and the Island, national advertising campaigns, part time working/job sharing, reduction and then removal of our Welsh language requirements.
8. A request for implementation of the Council's Market Supplements Policy was refused on 22/05/2025
9. On 02/05/2025 Human Resources advised against applying any signing bonus / welcome bonus owing to their concerns about legal challenge.
10. This Report arises from the recognition that it is now necessary to recruit solicitors without relevant expertise in the required fields, while providing specialist external legal support to develop them into their roles. Such support also delivering essential continuity of service during the development period.
11. The timing of this Report arises from the following new imperatives:
 - Candidates have been shortlisted for 2 of the vacancies. Those shortlisted are either newly qualified or inexperienced in the relevant field of work. Both are “stand alone” posts with no internal expertise to develop those who may be appointed. The roles are currently being discharged by agency staff. To ensure a smooth and safe transition, subject to funding approval, the intention is to retain the agency staff for three months, and six months, respectively. Clearly, during this transitional period there will be no financial contribution from any underlying vacancy. The anticipated costs will be in the region of £80k.
 - By now there are extensive concerns about the Council's information governance arrangements, which go well beyond 10 years of failing to meet the statutory deadline for responding to FOIA requests. Out of date policies, procedures, and the need for staff training risk enforcement action by the ICO in the event of a reportable data breach. An Information Governance Recovery and Improvement Programme has been devised. Additionally, the revised and upgraded CRM project requires expert professional support for successful delivery and there may

be an opportunity to appoint a paralegal, who will need to be supported and developed. Retaining the current Interim DPO is a more cost effective solution than an eighth round of unsuccessful advertising and the procurement of an external consultant to deliver the Improvement Programme. The anticipated costs of retaining the Interim DPO for a period of 6 months will be in the region of £20k.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this opinion?

There appear to be no other options available in the short/medium term, aside from indefinite reliance on agency staff/call off contracts. Based on current vacancies, this is overspending the budget of Council Business by £250k per annum. This is also the projected overspend for 2025/2026. This may increase as a further solicitor vacancy becomes effective from April 2026.

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

This decision is outside the Officers' Scheme of Delegation/budget allocated to Council Business. The Executive has authority to allocate funding from the Council's general balances pursuant to the Annual Budget decision made by full Council on 06/03/2025. The specific provision is in the 7th bullet point of para.2 of the Executive Report of 27/02/2025; attached as an enclosure to the said Report of 06/03/2025.

Ch – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

It is consistent with the Council's Annual Budget decision for 2025/2026, which was decided on 06/03/2025.

D – Is this decision within budget approved by the Council?

This is a request for access to specified funding from the Council's general balances. It is within authority delegated to the Executive from the Council.

Dd – Assessment of potential impacts (if relevant)

1. How does this decision affect our long-term needs as an Island?

It is intended to assist the Council in retaining an inhouse legal team to support services in effectively planning and delivering current and future public services on the Island. An inhouse model is not only more cost effective but also provides for the enhanced

contextual and organisational knowledge which is not possible through external support. It also requires materially less management.

2. Is this a decision that is anticipated to prevent future costs/dependencies on the Council? If so, how?

If approved, the proposal will contribute to reducing reliance on three agency solicitors, thereby reducing costs over time. It should be noted, though, that there are also three other solicitor vacancies; transitional support in respect of which has not been included in this Report. One of those posts is currently undertaken by a call off contract and one by an agency job share. As yet, there have been no candidates/viable candidates for these two posts. The third post will be advertised for the first time in February, so the position is not yet clear. This is the reason for the second recommendation in this Report. If the current proposal is supported by the Executive, and if it can be successfully implemented, then we may need further support in relation to developing other newly appointed solicitors to the remaining posts.

3. Have we collaborated with other organisations to come to this decision? If so, with whom?

No

4. Have the citizens of Anglesey played a part in drafting this way forward, including those directly affected by the decision? Explain how.

No

5. Note any potential impact this decision would have on the protected groups under the Equality Act 2010.

None. While in the context of employment related matters, this Report is about access to additional funding, so the EA 2010 is not relevant.

6. If this is a strategic decision, note any potential impacts the decision would have on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

Not directly relevant

7. Please note any potential effects that this decision would have on opportunities for people to use Welsh and not treat the language less favourably than English.

Engaging inhouse solicitors provides opportunities to develop Welsh language skills. Such opportunities do not arise where there is reliance on agency staff/call-off contracts. Recent advertisements continue to reflect that Welsh language skills are desirable and have been explicit in reflecting the opportunities for development in these skills. It should be noted, however, that applying this as a condition of any offer of employment would not be legally enforceable and runs the risks of deterring applicants. We shall continue to

require Welsh language skills, in accordance with our Welsh Language Standards in all newly advertised posts.

E – Who did you consult with and what were their comments?

1. Chief Executive / Leadership Team (mandatory)	Supportive of the principle
2. Finance / 151 Officer	Recommended this Report and the funding mechanism described therein
3. Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	Author of the Report
4. HR	The service has exhausted all of the normal HR recruitment processes and have been unsuccessful in appointing suitably experienced officers. These options are therefore needed under the unprecedented situation the service finds itself in.
5. Property	
6. IT	
7. Procurement	
8. Scrutiny	
9. Local members	

F – Appendices

[Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2025/2026](#)

Ff – Background papers (contact the report author for more information)

[Information Governance – Annual Report of SIRO 01/04/2024 – 31/03/2025](#)