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**COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 13.05.14**

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**PRESENT** - Councillor Eric M. Jones, (Chair)  
Councillor Angela Russell (Vice-chair).

Councillors:- Stephen Churchman, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Tudor Owen, Nigel Pickavance, Mike Stevens, Gethin Glyn Williams, Gruffydd Williams, Mandy Williams-Davies, Robert J. Wright and Eurig Wyn.

**OFFICERS:** Debbie Anne Williams Jones (Democratic Services Manager), Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**ALSO PRESENT:**

- i) In relation to item 5 on the agenda – Councillor W. Gareth Roberts – Cabinet Member for the Environment, Gwyn Morris Jones (Head of Highways and Municipal Department), Sion Gwynfryn Williams (Communications Manager), Janet Roberts (Senior Manager – Change Delivery and Support Service) and Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager- Corporate Commissioning Service).
- ii) In relation to items 7 and 8 on the agenda – Councillor John Wyn Williams – Cabinet Member for Planning, Aled Davies (Head of Regulatory Department), Rhun ap Gareth (Senior Solicitor).

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

In accordance with the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011, it was a requirement to share the chairpersonships of Scrutiny Committees on the basis of political balance and in accordance with the Council's decision, it was agreed that the chairpersonship of this Committee should go to the Independent Group to reflect the custom for the vice-chair to naturally take over the chair.

**RESOLVED: to elect Councillor Angela Russell as Chair of this Scrutiny Committee for 2014/15.**

**2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

Following the recommendation of the Business Group to leaders of the main political groups, the vice-chairpersonship of the Communities Scrutiny Committee would go to Plaid Cymru.

**RESOLVED: to elect Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies as Vice-chair of this committee for 2014/15.**

Councillor Eric Merfyn Jones took the opportunity to thank everyone for their support during his period as Chair.

**3. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES:**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillors Craig ap Iago and Caerwyn Roberts.

**4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received.

**5. URGENT ITEMS**

The Chair/Vice-chair agreed, under Section 100B (4) (b) Local Government Act 1972 to scrutinise the decision of the Cabinet to collect residual waste every three weeks as an urgent item because it would be too late to scrutinise the item at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee as the decision of the Cabinet would be implemented by then and the matter was important for residents of the County.

**THE WASTE STRATEGY - CHANGE TO RESIDUAL WASTE COLLECTION**

- a) Submitted – the report which had been submitted to the Cabinet on 29.4.2014 by the Cabinet Member for the Environment and the Head of Highways and Municipal Department noting their intention change the procedure for collecting residual waste of Gwynedd residents to a collection frequency of three weeks.
- b) The logic for the change was clearly noted and it was emphasised that it was timely to consider options for the use of residual bins as any waste placed in the green wheelie bins went directly into landfill.
- c) If the Waste Strategy was to be achieved, the statutory targets in terms of landfill allowances realised, along with the recycling levels and to avoid substantial fines for the Council – a change had to be introduced to the current system of collecting residual waste from domestic property in Gwynedd.
- Ch) After a successful engagement exercise period, it was highlighted that the main risks and concerns had been addressed in the Final Business Case.
- d) During the discussion, the following observations were made:-
  - i. Gwynedd was not ready for the change.
  - ii. People would have to be educated by concentrating on those who did not recycle.
  - iii. An intensive marketing plan would have to be considered with a clear communication plan.
  - iv. A clear and readable statement would have to be submitted to the press explaining the situation – beneficial to the image of Gwynedd.
  - v. The decision should have been made by the Full Council and not the Cabinet.
  - vi. There was support for the proposal but there was a need to hold a further discussion/investigation before launching the plan in Dwyfor in October 2014.
- dd) It was proposed, seconded and voted upon that the Committee should scrutinise the response of Dwyfor to the changes. The starting date for introducing the change in Dwyfor would be 6 October, 2014. There would be a fixed break prior to introducing the plan in Meirionnydd (7 March, 2015).

**RESOLVED: THAT THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WILL SCRUTINISE THE EFFECT OF THE CHANGES ON THE RESIDENTS OF DWYFOR DURING THE 4<sup>TH</sup> QUARTER OF 2014/15.**

**6. MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 4 March, 2014 were accepted as a true record, subject to noting that Councillor Stephen Churchman was

present at the meeting.

## 7. THE EFFECT OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS ON THE VIABILITY OF COMMUNITIES

- a) Submitted – the report of the Head of Regulatory Department responding to the questions identified during discussions at the preparatory meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (8.4.14).
- b) Reference was made to the research work of the Strategic Housing Unit that was trying to discover whether there were obstacles with 106 agreements (report distributed).
- c) The Cabinet Member provided a response to a request for information in relation to arrangements available to facilitate local people to remain in their communities along with the likely impact of proposed changes to the Planning System in Wales on providing affordable homes and implementing 106 agreements in the future.  
The Cabinet Member stated that:-

- i. Some mortgage companies/lenders now considered assisting and this change was to be welcomed.
- ii. Gwynedd Council had considered a scheme to support self-build but were criticised by the Government of 'unfair competition'. The Council was still trying to resolve the situation.
- iii. A 106 agreement could be considered as an 'additional tool' in a planning process to promote affordable housing.
- iv. It would be possible to consider the option of not having 'affordable housing' but rather to develop more social housing for renting but if this was a path which could be followed, then communities had to be ready to accept it.
- v. A 106 condition was not a perfect system but it was a system that encouraged and promoted the aspirations of residents to remain in their locality.

ch) During the discussion, the following observations were made:-

- i. Had the Council considered a Permanent Housing Condition?  
Response: Yes, but there was a need for a robust policy context to make this effective. Council Solicitors were gathering evidence to justify the need in order to establish the context.
- ii. Empty Units – how do we get them back into use?  
Response: Very enthusiastic Empty Homes Officers prioritise where there is need. Approximately 55 houses brought back into use annually. Resources were scarce.
- iii. Need to ensure that the Planning Bill gave consideration to local culture.  
Response: The Cabinet Member and the Head of Regulatory Department had attended the Government's Scrutiny Committee to respond to the Planning Bill. Gwynedd Council had responded robustly to issues involving the Welsh language and local culture when discussing the Bill.
- iv. A request from Councillor Gethin Williams for the number of 106 schemes that had been received.  
Response: The Head of Regulatory Department would share the statistics with the Councillor.

**RESOLVED: TO ACCEPT THE REPORT.**

**8. CONTROL OF CARAVANS PARKING ON GWYNEDD COUNCIL, SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK AND NATURAL RESOURCES WALES PROPERTY OR IN A LAY-BY WITHOUT PERMISSION**

- a) Submitted – a verbal report by the Head of Regulatory Department, highlighting that the above cases were discussed across departments in the Council and whoever dealt with an individual case depended on the ownership or control of the site. It was stated that the usual procedure was to respond to each case individually and to share information with other relevant departments. The most likely action would be to encourage the vehicles to move on. Usually the Police would be part of the discussion. There were no by-laws in Gwynedd generally to deal with this issue and it was very difficult to deal with some of the welfare rights issues that could arise.
- b) When considering specific cases that Councillors had in their wards, it was proposed that local discussions should be encouraged and held with officers and Council solicitors to resolve the ownership of the site.
- c) During the discussion, the following observations were made:-
  - i) The need to resolve the situation If vehicles were encouraged to move on it had to be ensured that they did not move on for example to the next lay-by.
  - ii) It was suggested that there should be more signs.
  - iii) There was a need to keep a balance – there was no need to ‘drive’ visitors from Gwynedd.

The information was accepted. The Head of Regulatory Department was willing for the Department to facilitate local discussions.

**9. SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14**

- a) The most recent version was submitted for information.

**Everyone was thanked for their contribution.**

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 1.15pm.