
THE COUNCIL 30/06/16

Present : Councillor Eric Merfyn Jones (Chairman);
Councillor Annwen Daniels (Vice-chair).

Councillors: Craig ab Iago, Stephen Churchman, Anwen Davies, Lesley Day, Gwynfor Edwards, Dyfed Edwards, Elwyn Edwards, Trevor Edwards, Thomas Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Aled Evans, Jean Forsyth, Simon Glyn, Gwen Griffith, Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Annwen Hughes, Chris Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, Sian Wyn Hughes, Jason Humphreys, Peredur Jenkins, Aled Wyn Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Brian Jones, Charles W. Jones, Elin Walker Jones, John Wynn Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Beth Lawton, Dilwyn Lloyd, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Michael Sol Owen, W. Roy Owen, William Tudor Owen, Caerwyn Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, W. Gareth Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Angela Russell, Dyfrig Siencyn, Mike Stevens, Gareth Thomas, Glyn Thomas, Ioan Thomas, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams, Gruffydd Williams, Hefin Williams, John Wyn Williams, Owain Williams, R. H. Wyn Williams and Mandy Williams-Davies.

Officers present: Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department), Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department - for item 8 on the agenda), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services / Monitoring Officer), Sion Huws (Senior Solicitor), Gareth Jones (Senior Planning and Environment Manager - for item 7 on the agenda), Nia Davies (Planning Policy Manager - for item 7 on the agenda), Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Endaf Cooke, Gweno Glyn, Aeron M. Jones, Dyfrig Wynn Jones, Linda A. W. Jones, June E. Marshall, Dewi Owen, Peter Read and Hefin Underwood.

1. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Council's annual meeting held on 12 May, 2016 as a true record.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Condolences

Condolences were expressed to the family of Jo Cox, MP, who was recently murdered in horrific circumstances in Yorkshire and Councillor Gwen Griffith paid tribute to her.

Condolences were extended to the family of the late Professor Gwyn Thomas, poet, scholar and literary critic.

It was noted that the Council wished to express condolences to everyone within the county's communities who had lost loved ones recently.

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect.

Congratulations

All of the children and young people from Gwynedd who had been competing at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Caerphilly were congratulated.

Elin Thomas, originally from Llannor, Pen Llŷn, was congratulated for representing Wales and singing the Welsh national anthem at the start of three recent international rugby matches between New Zealand and Wales, and she was wished every success for the future.

Other Matters

Local Government Reorganisation

It was reported that Mark Drakeford, Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, had published a statement on 23 June which confirmed that:-

- Local councillors elected in the May 2017 election would serve a five-year term (May 2017 to May 2022) and that this would coincide with the Welsh Government's electoral cycle, which was also now five years.
- Electoral boundaries would not be reviewed prior to the election in May, which meant that 75 elected members would continue to serve on Gwynedd Council from May 2017 onwards.

More information regarding local government reorganisation would be available by the autumn term.

Plaque Unveiling

It was reported that everyone was welcome to attend a ceremony at Plas Llanwnda, Castle Street, Caernarfon at 11:45am on Friday, 1 July, to unveil a memorial plaque for Major Lionel Wilmot Brabazon Rees, who was the only person from Gwynedd to be awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War.

Commemoration of the Battle of Mametz Wood

To mark a century since the Battle of Mametz Wood, the First Battle of the Somme during the First World War, an invitation was extended to everyone to the Official Opening of the Great War's Memorial Garden at Caernarfon Castle at 12:00pm on Thursday, 7 July. It was noted that other activities would also be held as part of the Opening of the Memorial Garden with the North Wales Rugby Choir and the Band of the Royal Signals taking part.

Council at its Best Ceremony

It was noted:-

- The Council at its Best Ceremony was an opportunity to celebrate all of the excellent work of the 7,000 staff members who work for Gwynedd Council to provide a range of services that make a difference to the county's residents, staff members who go beyond their job description to put the people of Gwynedd central to what they do.
- The five awards presented during the Ceremony were related to the Council's values namely Value for Money, Positive, Working as a Team, Respect and Serve, namely five values which are central to Council principles and lead its way of

working by highlighting what is important if the best services are to be provided for the people of Gwynedd.

- A large number of nominations had been received for the awards, which were for staff from every Council department, and that nominations had been made by colleagues of the staff nominated.

In order to provide a taste of the good work being achieved, a short video clip of the nominees in the Value for Money category was shown.

Word of Thanks

A member noted his wish to thank the majority of Gwynedd electors who had voted in favour of remaining a part of the European Union in the recent Referendum.

4. QUESTIONS

(1) Question from Councillor Sion Wyn Jones

"Is it possible for the Cabinet Member to make a statement regarding the lack of grass cutting in Gwynedd?"

Response from Councillor John Wynn Jones, Cabinet Member for the Environment

"The Member is aware of the very difficult financial situation facing the Authority and out of this Council's decision in its meeting on 3 March, 2016 to implement 49 cuts to services which included reducing the frequency of grass cutting in some locations.

As a consequence, we must, unfortunately, accept that this will lead to the deterioration in the appearance of some locations at certain times of the year and when there are variances to the growing season as evident this year.

The relevant Department is carefully monitoring the effect of implementing the changes and is also ensuring that locations where there are concerns regarding safety are given priority. The Department is also adapting its cutting programmes in order to mitigate the effect of this change. These adaptations to the cutting programmes will continue for what remains of the growing season and the year. I would like to thank Grounds Maintenance staff for ensuring that the work is being carried out despite the changes."

A supplementary question from Councillor Sion Wyn Jones

"Is the Cabinet Member willing to consider placing the responsibility of grass cutting to community and town councils or having a new strategy in the department?"

Response from Councillor John Wynn Jones, Cabinet Member for the Environment

"Of course, Gwynedd Council is willing to work with community councils in every possible field, and this is one of those possible fields, but we must be careful not to hand it over without certainty from the community councils on some matters, e.g. with regards to public liability insurance and also that they will accept responsibility should an accident take place and personally I think this is something that they should seriously consider. I would be willing to discuss any solution that is better than what we currently do. I congratulate the department as it has been a very difficult growing season with such changeable weather and all of us have experienced that in our

gardens in general and I believe that the department and employees who have been at the front line have undertaken amazing work in recent months."

(2) Question from Councillor Aled Evans

"Will the Cabinet Member responsible for planning report on the steps taken to make sure that linguistic impact statements provided with planning applications under the LDP are impartial, so that an applicant does not provide such a statement as part of his submission for permission for any development".

Answer from Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member for Planning

(The Cabinet Member's written response was distributed to the members in advance).

"Currently, we are determining planning applications according to the current Local Development Plan and the question is involved with the Local Development Plan, which will hopefully be adopted by the Council in March next year. Therefore, what drives the linguistic impact assessments are the supplementary planning guidance which are attached to the Local Development Plan. They are currently being adapted and as I have explained in an article on Rhaeadr at the beginning of the month, work is ongoing to update the supplementary planning guidance that will be attached to the Local Development Plan and a consultation process will be associated with that."

A supplementary question by Councillor Aled Evans

"Over the past 5 years, 75 linguistic reports have been submitted, but only one recommendation to refuse a development due to a detrimental impact on the Welsh language. Will you examine these 75 cases and investigate what was the impact on the Welsh language in order to discover how accurate these recommendations actually were?"

Answer from Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member for Planning

"We are talking here about planning applications that have been determined under the former plan. We are talking about moving forward and a methodology will be developed in terms of how assessments will be undertaken and of course, this will be included in the context of the new TAN 20. We are not quite sure what that will tell us, where these assessments will be undertaken, and the councillor has responded to the Welsh Government's consultation regarding that and all of us were given the opportunity to be part of that. Thereafter, all of this is under discussion - the shape of the new supplementary planning guidance depends on what will take place during the consultation and everyone is free to participate in that process."

(3) A question from Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd

"In view of the delay in any progress on monitoring the impact of the existing and proposed planning position on the Welsh language in Gwynedd in accordance with the Council's decision on 18 March, 2016, does the portfolio holder share the aspirations of placing a moratorium on developments of more than three dwellings until a solution to this matter is found that is satisfactorily to the Council and which is key to the survival of the Welsh language as a viable language in communities in Gwynedd?"

Answer from Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member for Planning

(The Cabinet Member's written response was distributed to the members in advance).

"I disagree that there has been a delay in response to the proposal on 18 March. There are two very important work streams ongoing, one to develop the supplementary planning guidance which will be attached to the new Local Development Plan, and this will drive how we undertake linguistic assessments. The second work stream is how we will monitor and review the plan in future therefore, I disagree that there has been a delay. The work is progressing and the article on Rhaeadr at the beginning of June explains exactly what are the steps that have been taken in that consultation process. In terms of a moratorium - that is not practical of course because how does someone stop applications from being submitted. We cannot stop applications from being submitted - we must deal with them and I do not think that there is anything significant about three dwellings. If we stop anything with more than three dwellings, are we therefore saying that three four-bedroom houses in the countryside are acceptable and that four small affordable houses for local use are unacceptable? That is the purpose of the planning system - to assess applications as they come in. We are currently assessing them against the Unitary Development Plan but once the new plan is adopted, we will be assessing against that plan."

A supplementary question from Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd

"In light of the fact that I believe that there has been a delay, does the Cabinet Member feel that he should give serious consideration to his current role so that he gives room to someone who is going to respect the democratic process which is part of this Council?"

Answer from Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member for Planning

"I disagree that the process has been delayed. The process has progressed correctly. At the moment, the current phase in which the Local Development Plan has reached is in the hands of the Inspector and that process is beyond the hands of the Council until it will return in March to be adopted by the Council and I am confident that I will be here at that time to submit it before the Council."

(4) Question from Councillor John Pughe Roberts

"The Council has received this independent assessment commissioned by language organisations. Should this assessment be presented to Local Development Plan Inspectors for them to use at their own discretion in examining that Plan?"

Answer from Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member for Planning

(The Cabinet Member's written response was distributed to the members in advance).

"Councils have already submitted all documentation to the Inspector. The Inspector is now driving the process. If the Inspector requests other documents from the Council, we will provide them. Indeed, he has asked some questions regarding what is in the plan and the service responds to that. It is not possible for the Council to forward any further information. Of course, it is a matter for any objector whether or not they decide to forward any information to the Inspector regarding any objection they have already submitted."

A supplementary question from Councillor John Pughe Roberts

"Does the Cabinet Member agree that every information is essentially important as evidence to improve the situation of the Welsh language in Gwynedd?"

Answer from Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member for Planning

"Yes, most certainly. All of the evidence out there is available for the Inspector when the Inspector will examine the plan. The Inspector's work is to decide whether the Local Development Plan is robust and should the Inspector require more information from any one who has been associated with the process thus far, the Inspector will request that information."

5. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2015/16

Submitted – The Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services for 2015/16.

In her presentation, the Director provided an overview of the performance of Gwynedd's Social Services over the past year, highlighting those elements that had been successful, and also referring to some matters that needed to be addressed. She also provided a taste of the direction of Social Services for the future and outlined the priorities for the years to come.

She also took advantage of the opportunity to recognise the guidance and support of Cabinet Members in the care field, Councillors W. Gareth Roberts and Mair Rowlands. She thanked all staff, providers and partners for their commitment and hard work in ensuring that children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families receive the best possible services. She also thanked everyone who cared informally for a member of the family or a neighbour, noting that their contribution was invaluable.

Following the presentation, the Director responded to a series of questions / observations from members in relation to:-

- Plans to address the shortage of severe dementia care nurses in South Meirionnydd.
- The lack of services / problems with services in South Meirionnydd and how to address those problems in the current challenging financial climate.
- Plans to ensure that the cohort of children who have very complex needs, but who do not receive a service from Derwen or the Council, received the appropriate support.
- Disappointment that there was no reference in the report to Council arrangements to ensure that adults with autism received sufficient services. The Director noted that it would not be practical to include everything in the report, but that she would accept the observation for next year.
- Importance of preventative work in the youth justice field and the need to express the Council's disappointment, through the Cabinet Member, in the statutory partnerships for reducing the funding available from them to maintain the service.
- The number of children who had to go beyond Gwynedd to receive care. The Director noted that she was unsure of the exact figures, but she could share them with the member after the Council meeting.
- The need for members who are school governors to address safeguarding at their governors meetings and the good work to raise the awareness of all Council staff about the safeguarding field and the need to continue to do so.
- The time it takes to transform services.
- Impact of challenges that faced the service on staff morale and turnover.
- How to address the other wave of inward migration that would take place, should condition 50 of the Lisbon Treaty be realised as people returned home from the continent in order to continue to receive free medical treatment.

- Recent news that people with mental illness who referred themselves for treatment at a local establishment were being turned away. The Director noted that she could not answer the specific observation but that she could discuss the matter with the Health Board should the member provide her with examples.
- The Social Services' complaints procedure and appeal process. The Director noted that she could share these documents with members.
- The work undertaken in the licensing field to ensure taxi drivers' responsibility for children they transport. The Director noted that she accepted the observation.
- Social Services' staffing arrangements on weekends and the need to ensure that patients are not prevented from being moved from a hospital, or to a hospital.
- A questions that had already been asked to the department regarding demography. The Director agreed that she would obtain the information for the member.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Leisure noted that several exciting and innovative developments were taking place in terms of the preventative field and it was proposed to build upon that in future. She thanked the department's staff and noted that it was a very difficult period and a very difficult field to work within and that staff would often go beyond their role to ensure that children were safe and that vulnerable families received the support they required.

The Cabinet Member for Adults and Health thanked the Director for the comprehensive and clear report of the current situation. He noted that the Health and Well-being Act, which would set the direction for the work in future, would involve a great change and he pleaded with his fellow members to attend the series of events that were being arranged by the department to highlight the changes and implications of the act.

The Director and her staff were thanked for all their work during the year.

6. NOTICES OF MOTION

- (A) In light of the current financial market and the result of the EU referendum, Councillor Annwen Hughes noted that she would withdraw her motion as there was a need for her to re-examine the matter.
- (B) The following notice of motion was submitted by Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies under Section 4.20 of the Constitution, and it was seconded:-

"That Gwynedd Council calls on HSBC Bank to re-consider their decision to close their branches at Blaenau Ffestiniog, Barmouth and Tywyn and to express our concern regarding the negative effect on businesses and inhabitants in these key towns within the county."

During the discussion, it was noted:-

- Disappointment regarding the bank's lack of contact with the town about their intention.
- That it was a cause for concern when services were starting to leave the county's main towns without a long-term plan.
- Although people's banking methods were changing, that banks had a duty to the community and that they should think how they were going to maintain services and modernise, without disappearing entirely from the rural towns.
- Banks listened to their shareholders instead of their customers.
- Failure to bank money locally could lead to businesses having to close.
- There was a need for the Council to contact HSBC to discuss with open minds and positive suggestions.

An amendment to the motion was proposed and seconded, namely that this Council would extend an invitation to HSBC bank to hold a discussion on the matter.

The proposer of the original motion agreed to amend the proposal on the lines noted with the consent of the Council and the seconder.

A vote was taken on the amended motion, and it was carried.

RESOLVED to accept the original motion, adjusted as follows:-

"That Gwynedd Council:-

- (a) Calls on HSBC Bank to re-consider their decision to close their branches at Blaenau Ffestiniog, Barmouth and Tywyn and to express our concern regarding the negative effect on businesses and inhabitants in these key towns within the county.**
- (b) Extends an invitation to HSBC bank to hold a discussion on the matter."**

At the end of the meeting, the Chairman asked members to submit any matters to be included in the Chairman's announcements in good time.

The Chairman referred to the following events:-

- Ras yr Iaith – 6 – 8 July;
- Cymru Rydd yn Ewrop Rally – 2 July, Y Maes, Caernarfon at 12:00pm.

Llew and Elin were thanked, who had been observing this meeting and a Cabinet meeting in order to have a taste of the Council's work.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 3.15 pm

CHAIRMAN