

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 22/09/16

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS: Stephen Churchman, Annwen Daniels, Annwen Hughes, Eric M. Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Edgar Wyn Owen, Tudor Owen, E. Caerwyn Roberts (Chair), Angela Russell and Gruffydd Williams.

OFFICERS: Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager Corporate Support) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

a) In relation to item 5 on the agenda - Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn - Cabinet Member Community Safety, Catherine E Roberts (Delivery Manager - Community Safety) and Chief Inspector Mark Armstrong (North Wales Police)

b) In relation to item 6 on the agenda:

Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies - Cabinet Member for the Economy and Community
Councillor Ioan Thomas - Cabinet Member for Housing and Deprivation and Arwel W Owen (Senior Housing Manager)

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn - Cabinet Member, Welsh Language and Debbie Williams Jones (Welsh Language Services Manager)

Councillor John Wynn Jones - Cabinet Member for the Environment and Gwyn Morris Jones (Head of Highways and Municipal Department)

Councillor Dafydd Meurig - Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory and Dafydd Wyn Williams (Temporary Regulatory Head)

c) In relation to item 7 on the agenda - Councillor John Wynn Jones - Cabinet Member for the Environment, Gwyn Morris Jones (Head of Highways and Municipal Department) and Peter Simpson (Street Enforcement Manager)

ch) In relation to items 8 and 9 on the agenda - Councillor Dafydd Meurig - Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory, Dafydd Wyn Williams (Temporary Regulatory Head), Gareth Jones (Senior Manager Planning and Environment)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Craig ab Iago, Dilwyn Morgan, Mike Stevens and Glyn Thomas

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None to note

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, that took place on 19 May 2016, were accepted as a true record subject to amending the attendance of Members in the English version.

5. ANNUAL COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

- a) Dyfrig Siencyn (Cabinet Member for Community Safety), Catherine Roberts (Delivery Manager – Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety) and Chief Inspector Mark Armstrong (North Wales Police) were welcomed to the meeting.
- b) The Cabinet Member highlighted that the partnership's work remit was extensive and complex and the main aim was to keep our communities safe. Attention was drawn to the report that traced the background of the services and the resources together with the partnership's work. It was noted that accountability was challenging as it was necessary to work jointly with the Local Services Board and the Regional Partnerships. He added that there was good collaboration with Anglesey.
- c) It was explained that the Partnership was required to formally report to the Committee on an annual basis providing an overview of the Partnership's main strategic developments over the year together with the commissioning work that sets the framework for priorities. This ensured that the Partnership delivered its obligations in accordance with sections of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2006.
- ch) In response to questions from Members directed to the Partnership following the preparatory meeting, the following observations were given:
 - Untaxed cars. Reference was made to the relevant website where details could be inputted. It was noted that it was the Police who dealt with untaxed cars with the cooperation of the DVLA.
 - Parking unused cars - did not appear to be a Police priority, however, the Chief Inspector highlighted that this was incorrect and the Police collaborated with the Council's Enforcement Services and the DVLA to resolve these issues. The Police were encouraged to collaborate with Housing Associations
 - Availability of a Local Police Officer - it was highlighted that Police station phone number were not shared - this was implemented centrally. It was agreed that paperwork dominated police work but every effort was being made to improve the local situation. One of these improvements was the presence of PCSO's on our streets.
 - The OWL (Online Watch Link) Scheme - It was noted that approximately £30k of the scheme's cost was funded by the Police. It was reported that the scheme had ended as insufficient numbers had registered with the scheme and that social media such as Twitter and Facebook worked better
 - Schemes supporting the priorities. It was reported that 26 schemes in 2015/16 were green, eight were amber and one was red. It was noted that a number of the amber schemes had transferred to the 2016/17 scheme.
 - Nuisance Calls. It was reported that the Police had cooperated with the Trading Standards Department to try and safeguard older,

vulnerable people. It was noted that the 'Truecall' device had been promoted and had been successful.

- Antisocial behaviour powers had been adopted. It was reported that Gwynedd, like Anglesey, had now completed the process of adopting these powers since July 2016.
- Transferring the WISDOM Team (which included officers from the Police and Probation Service) to work from the Penrallt Council Building. This was a Service where the two agencies collaborate closely to manage the most dangerous criminals in our communities. In terms of the time-scale, it was hoped to move the team to the building in November.
- Time-scale for completing analyses of training requirements within the domestic abuse field. It was reported that the training was to raise awareness and it was accepted that the Welsh Government time-scale was ambitious.

- d) In reference to the Partnership's work and priorities, it was highlighted that the 2016/17 Plan aimed to build on the extensive work that had occurred over the last few years that led to a substantial decrease in Crime and Disorder in the Counties of Gwynedd and Anglesey. The Plan would focus on work areas, based on the strategic assessment, and on the guidance and priorities established by the Regional Board. The Partnership would continue to look at work areas that had already been established and contribute to focus areas.

Attention was drawn to the Partnership's main milestones that had been included in the report.

- dd) In response to a question regarding concerns about serious sexual offences, the Chief Inspector noted that the events in the news were historical incidents. In the context of 'numbers' it was noted that this was 'significant' as the number of recorded incidents suggested that people had faith in the police to come forward with a complaint. The Community Safety Delivery Manager added that there had been a huge increase in support work over the last 10 years and an increase in the number of children reporting. It was added that the change in culture was to be welcomed and a healthy discussion was being conducted about this field at a regional level.
- e) The WISDOM Plan was welcomed and in the context of the PREVENT element it was noted that the Council had a duty to address the needs.
- f) In response to a question regarding ending the OWL Scheme, the Chief Inspector highlighted the need to make better use of funding and reaching the majority. It was accepted that the resource was valuable, however, unfortunately insufficient use was made of it.
- ff) In response to a question regarding an increase in the county's population during July and August and how services forward planned in terms of resources, the Chief Inspector noted that the services did try to respond to demand by using resources differently as there were no additional resources.
- g) The Cabinet Member thanked the Members for the observations. He added that perhaps the area did not get sufficient attention and suggested the need to conduct a briefing session with all Members in order to share

basic information about aspects of this field.

The Cabinet Member thanked the Community Safety Delivery Manager for her expertise in this field and for the work that the small team achieved.

The Cabinet Member, the Chief Inspector and the Community Safety Delivery Manager were thanked for their contributions.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

6. PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORT

In accordance with the Council's performance management system, an overview of the Council's performance was submitted focusing on Poverty, Deprivation, Economy, Housing, The Welsh Language and the Environment. It was highlighted that the report addressed the transformational plans included in the Strategic Plan and drew attention to the performance measures that were important to the people of Gwynedd and central to the Council's day to day work.

i. The Economy Field

- a. High value, quality jobs - it was highlighted that a project by the Welsh Government to sell the potential of Gwynedd to developers had played a prominent role in creating 35 high-value jobs in the County (definition of high value job was a salary of £26,500+).
- b. Attention was drawn to 15 jobs at NMI Gaming Parc Menai: there were a number of opportunities here with the potential to create approximately 200 jobs in the County: need to consider appropriate skills, mindsets and being creative to seek the best benefit from these opportunities
- c. High value profile allocation - it was reported that money would not be paid until after the event. Opportunity to evaluate how many opportunities local companies have had to provide e.g. food and accommodation and the opportunities to share images of the County.

Matters arising from the discussion:

- There was no money for investment and therefore it was necessary to be creative when considering implementation methods in areas such as Dwyfor and Meirionnydd. It was suggested that the Council should act as an enabler - this was a significant challenge. Grants and resources were getting scarce and it was difficult to regenerate the economy without funding - it was necessary to be pioneering and use the available tools and resources better.
- Tourism was the area's main economy - there was no sufficient support available from the Council to attract people in
- The investments at Zip World and Parc Menai were addressed, however, it was disappointing that there was no reference to the investment at Plas Heli, Pwllheli
- Need to extend the walking/cycling paths in Penllyn
- In the context of the percentage of customers who were satisfied with the Museums and Arts service - it was

- suggested that the baseline should be set prior to discussing the cuts
- Lloyd George Museum - they had to try and work in a different way to save the service
 - A suggestion to adapt the wording of the report to reflect cuts

ii. Housing Field

- a) Working Together against Poverty project comprised two priorities - spatial poverty and population poverty. It was noted that research by the Council had identified that 6,500 homes in Gwynedd were being affected by the Welfare Reform Act. It was highlighted that priority would be given to one parent households.
- b) Tackling Poverty Agenda - this did not percolate through the Council's departments and therefore it was suggested to invite Heads of Services, Officers and Cabinet Members to meet to ensure that the agenda was being addressed.

Matters arising from the discussion:

- Child poverty - the problem needed to permeate down to Council services
- Post 16 transport was an example of the lack of commitment to ensure that children from the poorest households in Gwynedd receive higher education
- It was heartening to see a reduction in the waiting time in the homelessness field
- Affordable housing - the number of new homes built was challenged and it was suggested that there were more than 31.

iii. Welsh Language Field

- a) Promote the Welsh Language by supporting and empowering four communities - it was reported that the project had been very successful in Dolgellau
- b) The Welsh Language and Public Services - It was noted that this issue was on the agenda of the Local Services Board for 23.9.16 where a discussion would be stimulated regarding the best way to promote the Welsh Language.
- c) Language Charter - response to local data collated was being implemented. The scheme would be extended nationally
- ch) The Welsh Language within the Council - an audit had been completed. The response had been heartening - the next steps would be raising awareness and people's confidence to use Welsh. Discussions would take place with the Customer Care Unit

Matters arising from the discussion:

- Following a statement from the Welsh Language Commissioner of the proposal not to hold examinations for Welsh as a second language, the Cabinet Member highlighted that he supported the statement. In Gwynedd it was expected that every child would be fluent in Welsh and would sit an examination in Welsh as a first language.
- The levels of Welsh speakers in Garndolbenmaen had

- decreased - a request by the Local Member to be included in the discussions
- Language needed to bridge services and not be restricted to departments such as Housing and Planning. Any language issues should be referred to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Welsh Language.

iv. Highways

- a) The latest percentage predictions in terms of collected municipal waste was now 62.7% - the aim was to attain 70% by 2025.
- b) Collections every three weeks had been a good exercise - Conwy were now considering trialling four weekly collections. It was highlighted that Gwynedd had to be aware of the options

Matters arising from the discussion:

- A new service sorting mixed waste at the Rhwngddwyrdd Recycling Centre to be addressed - this was very effective
- Consultancy Department - deficit in the net target of £160k - need more detailed explanation regarding the reasons

In response to a question regarding a request made for the Cabinet Member (19.5.16) to hold discussions with the Welsh Government for the purpose of including home composting tonnages in the recycling calculation, so that it did not affect the Council's performance against its targets, it was highlighted that the Cabinet Member had contacted them but without success. It was added that he and the Head of Highways and Municipal Services would meet the Cabinet Secretary (Welsh Government) for the Environment and Rural Affairs in November.

v. Regulatory field

- a) The Cabinet Member highlighted that the measures were being monitored and challenged frequently
- b) In accordance with the Members' request a report (transportation measure THS/007) was submitted by the Cabinet Member. The report gave information regarding the position of disabled people under 60 years old with concessionary bus passes, together with the position in Gwynedd and how this compared to other counties. It was reported that Gwynedd compared favourably with similar (rural) Councils

Matters arising from the discussion:

- Thanks was given for the Transportation Measure THS/007 report
- It was suggested that the term 'roughly comply' was not used in the context of food hygiene establishments (measure PAM9 Public Protection). It should be interpreted as either 'yes' or 'no'.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

7. STREET ENFORCEMENT SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION PROPOSALS

The scrutiny investigation report on Street Enforcement was submitted to the Cabinet Member John Wynn Jones. All were reminded by Councillor Angela Russell (as Councillor Annwen Daniels, Chair of the investigation had to leave the meeting early) of the background to the brief and a summary of the work undertaken was provided.

- b) The Cabinet Member reiterated his thanks to the members for their thorough investigation, and having consulted with many people, it was recognised that the report was a fair reflection of the work.
- c) During the discussion, the following observations were noted:
 - That the investigation offered a creative response e.g. using an external company to set fines in order that the internal unit may focus on elements such as training and raising awareness
 - A suggestion that businesses should contribute towards the maintenance of roundabouts through sponsorship
 - Consultation with schools was key - people had to be educated to protect the environment
 - There were opportunities here for culture change

In response, the Cabinet Member accepted the need to be creative. It was reported that good work to raise awareness and successful campaigns were being undertaken by the Enforcement Unit. If it was determined to use an external company to set fines, it had to be ensured that every Councillor supported the decision and that an effective engagement scheme was in place.

RESOLVED to accept the report, accept the recommendations in it and seek a report back by the Cabinet Member within approximately 6-9 months on what had been achieved following the recommendations.

8. REVIEW OF RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- a) A report was submitted by the Cabinet Member on the proposal to review and update the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and receive the Committee's initial input to the process. It was explained that the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 placed a duty on authorities to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan. It was added that there was a statutory requirement to review the plan every 10 years and Gwynedd needed to undertake a review before November 2017.
- b) It was highlighted that the Welsh Government had published a guidance for Local Authorities which explained the procedure and steps to be taken to undertake the review together with the preparation for a new plan. The Authority had to consider the purpose and use of the Plan as a document that encompassed the Authority's duties and sets priorities in the field of rights of way and access by foot, bicycle and on horseback.
- c) Since the plan's publication in 2007, it was reported that major changes had influenced this field, such as cuts in maintenance budgets for the network of paths, the coming and influence of new legislation that overlapped the access field, together with a general growth in the call for high standard paths and facilities and a recognition of their importance to the tourism industry.
- ch) The Committee was requested to agree that there was a need and justification to

prepare a new plan for Gwynedd and to be supportive of the intention to review the plan.

- d) In response to a question regarding the network in the County, the Senior Manager Planning and Environment noted that the existing plan prioritised popular paths and therefore this was where resources were placed. It was added that a review would give Gwynedd an opportunity to look again at the priorities in terms of network maintenance rather than prioritise the most popular paths. He added that reviewing the plan would be a valuable task.
- dd) In response to a comment regarding equal access rights to all, it was reported that the Equal Rights Act would be considered as part of the review and equality assessments would need to be implemented.
- e) In response to a comment regarding the possibility of collaboration with the National Park, although it was not necessary for the Park to be part of the review, it was noted that discussions had been conducted with the Park for approximately 18 months. Although it was not statutory for the Park to produce a plan, in practice it would make sense to establish a plan that would meet with the requirements of the Council and the Park. It was added that the Park supported the principle of preparing a joint Plan. The need to discuss resources and finance was recognised, but with the need for specialist knowledge about the Park network it was suggested that by working together the plan would be more robust and practical.
- f) In response to a comment regarding how the paths would be prioritised and the need to consider local resources to keep the paths open, it was reported that a new plan would not give details of specific paths, but would look at putting a framework in place to prioritise work and to try and ensure effective operational arrangements.
- ff) During the discussion the following observations were noted:
 - What was the size of the network? Was it possible to focus on the paths that are used mostly?
 - Accepted that a review was necessary, however they should be careful regarding how it was implemented
 - There were insufficient resources in 2007, therefore what would the position be in 2016?
 - They had to invest in a resource that would be required in the future - important for the tourism industry
 - Was it possible to attract resources from other sources?
 - It was necessary to see that Biodiversity was included in the discussions

It was highlighted that any investments and improvements to the rights of way network were likely to be totally dependent on grant monies.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded.

RESOLVED:

- a) **that the Committee support the intention to review and prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Gwynedd and that the Regulatory Department identifies methods of pooling resources for this work.**
- b) **that the Department contacts the Welsh Government to impress upon them**

to fund the review.

- c) that the Cabinet Member submits a progress report to the Scrutiny Committee in approximately 6 months time

9. THE COUNCILS PLANNING SYSTEM - SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION BRIEF

- a) A brief was submitted to undertake a scrutiny investigation on the planning procedure to consider the Council's planning systems and their suitability to correspond with the economic needs of the County's communities as well as other factors.

RESOLVED to accept the brief.

The following members were nominated to serve on the investigation. Councillors Eric M Jones, Angela Russell, Gruffydd Williams and Tudor Owen.

It was suggested that a message should be sent to Members who were absent to give them an opportunity to put their names forward.

10. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2016-2017

- a) The Committee's forward work programme for 2016-2017 was presented.

The information was accepted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 1.15 pm

CHAIRMAN