
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE THURSDAY 24 JANUARY 2017

PRESENT: E. Caerwyn Roberts (Chair)
Dilwyn Morgan (Vice-chair)

COUNCILLORS: Stephen Churchman, Annwen Daniels, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, Eric M. Jones, Linda Morgan, Edgar Wyn Owen, Nigel Pickavance, Angela Russell, Mike Stevens, Glyn Thomas 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 Mandy Williams-Davies (Cabinet Member), Llŷr B Jones (Senior Economy and Community Manager), Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer)
- b) In relation to item 6 on the agenda - Councillor Mair Rowlands (Cabinet Member), Ian Jones (Byw'n Iach Senior Manager)
- c) In relation to item 7 on the agenda - Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member), Owen Owens (Senior Education Systems Manager)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Craig ab Iago and Tudor Owen

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

The following member declared a personal interest for the reasons noted:

- Councillor Linda Morgan in item 7 on the agenda, as she worked at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor.

The member was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and she withdrew from the Chamber during the discussion on the application noted.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 24 11 2016, were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

5. BEACH MANAGEMENT CUTS

An initial report was submitted by the Cabinet Member, outlining the effect of cuts approved by the Full Council (March 2016) on the budgets to manage Blue Flag and Green Flag beaches. The anticipated implications were highlighted, but because the cuts had not been fully implemented, it was difficult to provide a detailed report on the effect thus far. Although it was possibly premature to discuss the impact during the transitional period, it was accepted that there was a need to hold a discussion and keep an eye on the possible effect.

In response to the report, a request was made to consider the situation at Morfa Nefyn and Nefyn as they were no longer protected. The Local Councillor noted that the Community Council do not have the expertise to accept responsibility and it was highlighted that the Community Council considered giving the leasehold back to the Crown.

During the ensuing discussion, the following comments were highlighted regarding the beaches of Morfa Nefyn and Nefyn:

- If the Community Council and Gwynedd Council were not going to protect these beaches, who would take the responsibility?
- The Crown Estate would have to be persuaded to accept responsibility
- What arrangements were in place before responsibility was relinquished?
- Would it be possible to propose alternative plans?

In response to the comments, it was accepted that the situation at Morfa Nefyn and Nefyn was difficult and a discussion needed to be held with the landowners to ensure access control to the beach. It was noted that the Council possibly had been too eager in the past to accept responsibility over the management of the beaches, but by now in the context of cuts, it would be timely to hold discussions with the landowners and to highlight to them their responsibility and legal status.

Should Nefyn Town Council surrender its leasehold, its responsibility as an entity would decrease, and the responsibility would rest with the Crown Estate.

The Senior Manager highlighted that he would convey the Scrutiny Committee's concerns to the Crown Estate in a meeting in February.

The following comments on the content the report in general were highlighted:

- Concern regarding public safety
- Needed to manage access to the beaches for machinery / boats
- The beaches were one of the County's main assets and therefore they needed to be safeguarded
- The burden of responsibility on the Community Councils
- Ethical responsibility although it was not statutory
- What are the responsibilities of the beach wardens?
- Were any lifeguards being employed?
- Important to include volunteers in beach protection arrangements
- Need to allow local people to participate
- What is the future of the Blue Banner?

In response to the comments above, the Senior Manager emphasised that the proposals were not ones the Department wished to implement, but that they were part of the Gwynedd Challenge arrangements. He explained that the situation was a very complex one and that the cuts had been implemented within a very tight schedule and that the factors were very different for every area. In situations where the arrangements had not

been confirmed, it was noted that some local establishments showed an interest and it would therefore be possible to consider suitable models.

In response to a comment about the future of the Blue Banner, it was highlighted that a number of external factors influenced this, such as the quality of the water which is beyond the Council's control. It was noted that there were increasing requirements on making an application and there was no guarantee or assurance on the success of the applications from year to year. It was highlighted that applications were submitted under the usual procedure with the increasing requirements making the situation difficult.

The recommendation to accept the report as an initial report was proposed and seconded, and to re-visit the situation after the cuts were fully implemented.

An amendment to the proposal of accepting the initial report was made, but further consideration needed to be given to the Morfa Nefyn and Nefyn beaches

A further amendment to the proposal of accepting the initial report was made, but there was concern regarding the Morfa Nefyn and Nefyn beaches. A request to the Department was made to urgently discuss the way forward with the Cabinet Member before the holiday term, and carry out a review of these beaches.

RESOLVED to accept the initial report, and the following observations were suggested:

- **That there is concern regarding the beaches of Morfa Nefyn and Nefyn**
- **A request to the Cabinet Member to urgently discuss this unique situation with the Economy Department before the holiday term**
- **To receive a report at the end of the holiday term on the full effects.**

6. UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES SERVICE IN MEETING EFFICIENCY SAVINGS TARGETS AND THE RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES

A full report was submitted by the Economy and Community Senior Manager, responding to all of the questions from the Scrutiny Committee's Preparatory Meeting for the Healthy Communities Service's response to the report of the Auditor General for Wales 'Delivering with less - Leisure Services' as well as the progress the service is making in achieving the efficiency savings target as set by the Council's Financial Strategy 2015 - 2018.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that the efficiency savings target was a substantial one and the Department was praised for implementing and meeting the target.

In response to a question regarding offering free services to underprivileged families, it was noted that leisure centres did not offer a reduction based on income, but a cheaper package on quiet times - the service would not assess income levels on the basis of use. It was suggested that there would be a possibility to look into this.

In response to a question regarding the Free Swimming sessions, it was reported that it was the Council's decision not to allow parents to go into the pool for free and that the Free Swimming in Gwynedd received a substantial grant reduction.

In response to a comment that Gwynedd did not appear to give equal opportunity for children to play, it was noted that every child in Gwynedd received free membership at the Leisure Centres.

The Service was thanked for the encouraging report and the service was congratulated for its overhaul of the situation. However, should there be a need to increase fees to above inflation level, a comment was made regarding the need to be careful not to 'send people away'.

In response to a question regarding sharing good practice, it was highlighted that this was done mostly through area management structure (where one manager is responsible for multiple centres) and staff being part of team across the Service. Nevertheless, it was emphasised that the target was not reached and therefore a reference was made to the need to provide alternative schemes in order to ensure the provision of a sustainable service for the future.

During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were highlighted:

- Other options to alleviate losses must be considered - a suggestion that further research work was needed before taking action
- Need to see better use of resources
- Need to attract more people through the door
- There was a possibility of needing to consider the leisure centres as a business rather than a service
- The Leisure Centres were vital for Health and Well-being
- Additional activities had to be considered

In response to a question regarding when the Service would likely submit information on the new models, it was suggested that there would be an opportunity for the Committee to scrutinise the proposals fully in September.

RESOLVED to accept the report, giving thanks to the Service for its work and noting that the members would welcome information on alternative models in September 2017.

7. POST 16 EDUCATION TRANSPORT

Councillor Linda Morgan left the room during the discussion.

The Chair highlighted that the field had been scrutinised in detail, but disappointment was expressed with the operation thus far.

Submitted - a report by the Cabinet Member on further progress made in relation to the recommendations of the Post-16 Education Transport Scrutiny Investigation. It was reported that the College faced financial difficulties, and by now had refused to operate as an agent. No specific reasons were given as to why it would not act as an agent.

It was highlighted that the Transport Policy had been reviewed and discussions between the Council and transport providers had come into fruition through perseverance. It was reported that there was an agreement on the flexibility of travel time on each route apart from one. (It was noted that discussions continued with the transport provider on the routes in question). In order to raise awareness of the changes, the need to arrange a publicity campaign by March was noted.

In response to the recommendation of collecting data to discover whether travel costs led to students dropping out of higher education, it was noted that there were two questionnaires for the 2016-2017 educational year, including a specific question regarding transport. It was explained that an analysis of the questionnaire would be available at the beginning of the summer term.

It was reported that a Users Forum had been established and that it was very successful as a means of holding discussions. It was highlighted that the Users Forum would include representatives from the College, Council Officers, Transport Providers and Students. It was suggested that the minutes of the Forum could be shared at the next preparatory meeting

The Cabinet Member expressed that he accepted that implementing the recommendations had taken time, but by persevering, the majority of the recommendations involving the Council had been implemented. One of the main successes was ensuring the flexibility of the travel tickets.

During the ensuing discussion, the following observations were highlighted:

- That the College should accept responsibility for the students
- Need to emphasise that this was a partnership between the College and the Council and there was a need for the College to play its part
- Need to continue to ask the College to work as an agent
- The College had a responsibility for getting students to attend the College
- Welcome the ticket's flexibility - scope to expand hours after 6pm?
- Would it be possible to distribute a questionnaire to parents?
- Extend an invitation to the Assembly Member, Mr Ken Skates (Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure) and Coleg Menai Representatives to meet with the Committee.

RESOLVED to accept the report. Although the recommendations have taken time to be realised, with perseverance, the situation has improved. The following observations were made:

- **The minutes of the User Forum to be submitted to the next preparatory meeting**
- **Extend an invitation to the Assembly Member, Mr Ken Skates (Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure) and Coleg Menai Representatives to meet with the Committee.**