

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

REPORT TO A MEETING OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

Date of Meeting:	16 October 2018
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Craig ab Iago, Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure
Liaison Officers:	Iwan T. Jones, Corporate Director Morwena Edwards, Corporate Director
Contact Telephone Number:	01286 679685
Title of Item:	Housing, Culture & Leisure Performance Report

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update you on what has been achieved in the field for which I, as Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure, have responsibility. This will include outlining the latest and the pledges in the Strategic Plan; the position of the performance measures; and the latest in terms of the savings and cuts plan.
- 1.2. I would remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at meetings of the Economy and Community and the Adults, Well-being and Housing management teams, which also included representation from the scrutiny committee.
- 1.4. I am happy with the performance overall, and I am eager to see us continuing to succeed despite all the challenges the departments will face in the near future. My priority during the next period will be to ensure that the Housing Department moves forward to draw up a Strategy that will set a clear direction for the Housing field in future.

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2. DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1 To accept and note the information in the report.
- 2.2 The Cabinet is requested to approve re-profiling the leisure facilities' savings for a £157k sum as these savings will not be achieved in 2018-19 as the Healthy Living Company is not in operation until 1 April 2019.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 3.1. In order to ensure effective performance management.

4. STRATEGIC PLAN PROJECTS

- 4.1. We face several challenges in the Housing field, including the effect of our ageing population and, obviously, the effect of changes in benefits. Nevertheless, we have opportunities to make a difference to the people of Gwynedd. The purpose of the **Suitable and Affordable Housing** project is to get a detailed understanding of the nature of the demand for housing within our communities so that we can plan for the future and make a difference.
- 4.2 To this end, the Housing Department has been working on assessing Housing needs in Gwynedd. The work of completing the Housing Needs Assessment is currently coming to an end, and the report will help confirm the housing needs along with the fields and locations that should be prioritised. This will be a strong foundation to the Gwynedd Housing Strategy (2018-2023) that will be launched within the next two months. I would like to draw members' attention to the fact that I will launch the Housing Strategy soon. I had hoped that I would be in a position to do this by September this year, but discussions are still ongoing with the Department to ensure that the Strategy is fit for purpose.
- 4.3 The **Identify and Promote Housing Schemes and Initiatives** project endeavours to improve residents' access to support in relation to housing needs while identifying schemes and initiatives that are available to assist them. The picture in terms of the assistance involving housing needs is complex, and is not simple for people. The challenges which face people vary greatly, and it is essential that we put what matters to people at the heart of our interventions. Therefore, I see the need to review this support to ensure that it meets what matters to people and is provided as effectively as possible. I am confident that the action plan and milestones for this project will be presented to me by the next performance challenge meeting. I have asked the Department to review how they could collaborate better to support the people of Gwynedd.
- 4.4 There are many existing schemes in the pipeline, including a new development on the former Frondeg site in Pwllheli, and multi-agency discussions are taking place to develop a Homelessness Hub in Bangor.

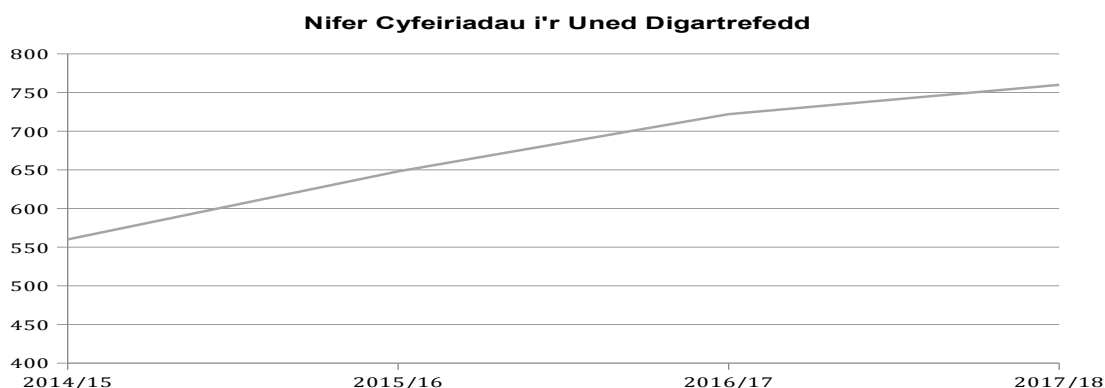
5. MEASURING PERFORMANCE

- 5.1 **Appendix 1** reports on performance measures that are associated with my portfolio in the Economy and Community Department. There, I am responsible for

the the Leisure Service, Youth, Community Regeneration, Museums and the Arts, Archives and Libraries and Information.

- 5.2 The purpose of the **Libraries and Information Service** is to ensure that Gwynedd residents have access to support, resources and information which gives them the opportunity to learn and gain skills, read and enjoy. The service has recently been through a period of change but has now reached a stable period.
- 5.3 I am very pleased to see a new-look Library open in Bala, and also a lifelong learning campus. The library now offers better provision, and offers a welcoming resource to everyone. This period is very exciting for the Libraries as they are also trialling self-service machines in nine catchment area libraries to respond to the changing demands of the residents of Gwynedd. Whilst trialling these machines, it has allowed us to free up staff time to assist the residents of Gwynedd with other enquiries.
- 5.4 I am comfortable that the service is on the right track, with the number of loans remaining stable for the period. The number of library visits is falling, and this is a national trend. However, the method of recording and gathering this information is unreliable, therefore the service will need to consider this.
- 5.5 Since April, the service has started to collect information on the enquiries they receive in libraries. This information is very interesting and shows that half the people who come to the libraries do not come to borrow a book. This information demonstrates that a high percentage come to the library to get assistance with information technology, tourism enquiries and enquiries with regard to benefits. I believe that, to all purposes, libraries are used as a 'one-stop shop', therefore this is something to consider for the future.
- 5.6 The **Museums and Arts Service** runs two museums in Gwynedd and is responsible for the collections and creating exhibitions at both, namely: Storiell and the Lloyd George Museum. Discussions are ongoing with Neuadd Buddug, with discussions to be held with the school about the way forward. I will be keeping an eye on this in future. Since April, **96% of customers have stated that they are happy with the service provided.**
- 5.7 The purpose of the **Youth Service** is to ensure access for young people (aged 11-25) to a range of informal learning experiences that give them opportunities to gain skills, to venture, to enjoy and to play a full part in their communities. Obviously, the past months have seen major change in the Youth Service as we engage on a new provision model for the county. I submitted a report to you in June 2018 on the remodelling, and steps have now been taken to establish the new staffing structure.
- 5.8 The service is now drawing up new measures, and talking to young people to see what they would be eager for the service to measure, therefore I hope that this work could be elaborated upon the next time I report to you. However, I have included the last information in appendix 1 on the measures that currently exist, bearing in mind that the existing measures are no longer fit for purpose.
- 5.9 The Leisure Service provides Healthy Living and Sports programmes which provide a range of inclusive physical activities and Healthy Living Centres facilities in the county.

- 5.10 I am satisfied with the service's performance, with acceptable progress having been made since April 2018. It is important to note that this progress has continued during the very busy period of preparing the service for its transfer to the new leisure company.
- 5.11 The number of visits to centres is slightly higher than the same time last year (2402 for quarter 1) and customer satisfaction is also slightly higher (89.54%), although customers are still dissatisfied about the quality of the changing facilities, car parks and lockers in dry centres. The highest scores in the questionnaires relate to staff behaviour and professionalism.
- 5.12 The **% of 11 year old children who have attained the National Curriculum Standard for swimming** has been increasing annually. Great work has been achieved in the Bro Dysynni Centre catchment area during the past year to target children who failed to reach the standard at the beginning of year 6, and this method of working will be extended to other catchment areas during the coming year.
- 5.13 The Swimming Development Scheme is reviewed annually and, this year, we have developed new resources for parents to explain the learning to swim pathway and trial free swimming lessons for adults.
- 5.14 The Cabinet is aware that the Housing Department has been working on developing a Housing Strategy for the next five years. The work of ensuring that we have a detailed understanding of the nature of the demand for housing within our communities is underway. I intend to present to you a Strategy that will outline our main priorities for the field of Housing in Gwynedd. The progress on the strategy to date has been quite disappointing, but I have now had an opportunity to meet all managers in the department in order to ensure joint ownership of the document. I trust that I will be in a position to present a document to you in the near future.
- 5.15 The Cabinet will already be aware that there is an increasing demand for the Homelessness service following the arrival of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. There is also evidence to suggest that this increase will continue, with a very high proportion of single people who are homeless or at threat of becoming homeless.



- 5.16 Although the measures of the **Homelessness Unit** show some slippage, the department has had significant success in preventing homelessness, with the percentage of people being prevented from becoming homeless at its highest in north Wales, and significantly higher than Wales on average. However, the level of support that is currently available in Gwynedd is unlikely to be sustainable due to the increasing pressure on the Unit. The most successful prevention methods used

are assisting people to move to social housing and private rented accommodation. In future, the Department, jointly with our partners, will need to work on innovative schemes with an emphasis on preventative intervention.

- 5.17 To this end, the Department has submitted an application for funding from Welsh Government's Innovative Housing Fund, and has reached the short-list. If we are successful, the aim is to attract the funding that would develop 'pods' on a site in Caernarfon that will offer supported housing for the most vulnerable people in our communities. I will be able to update you as part of my next report if we are successful.
- 5.18 There is a reduction in the **average number of calendar days taken to issue a disabled facilities grant (170 days)**. This measure compares well with the performance of Wales; nevertheless, the Department believes that this time can be reduced significantly by working in a different method jointly with the Adults Department and the Children Department. The Department will now commence work on this, and I have asked the Department to look at a measurer that measures customer satisfaction.
- 5.1 The **Empty Housing Team** has had sweeping success with their 'First-Time Buyer Grants' scheme. The purpose of this support is to reduce the number of long-term vacant housing in Gwynedd by providing support to first-time buyers to meet the costs of renewing houses. The Empty Housing Team launched the scheme in February 2018. The maximum grant of £20,000 helps first-time buyers to bring houses back to standard and then, back to use. Applications to the value of £1.5million have been approved since February 2018; this is 90 houses with 200 people being homed and staying within our communities.
- 5.20 The performance of the **Empty Housing Team** is on top throughout Wales, and you can see in Appendix 2 that there has been an increase against the measure of **PSR/004 The percentage of private sector dwellings that had been empty for more than six months on 1 April which were returned to occupation during the year as a result of direct action by the local authority**. By the end of this performance period, 10 houses have come back into use, with 25 people of Gwynedd being homed.
- 5.21 Ensuring that older people can continue being independent and live in their own homes is a priority for us as a Council. The 'Home Improvements Loan' Scheme is aimed at promoting the independence of older people, enable vulnerable people, and people who are on a low income to live in warm and safe houses. We can see that substantial savings can be made by enabling people to stay in their homes. 16 loans to the value of £268,000 have been given to Home Improvement Loans since 2015, which has enabled 32 people to continue to live in their homes.

6. FINANCIAL/SAVINGS SITUATION

- 6.1 In terms of the more effective running of leisure facilities scheme, it was reported at previous meetings that it was quite a challenge to ensure that the company that will be responsible for managing the leisure facilities' provision (Cwmni Byw'n lach Cyf.) operates during the autumn 2018 term. Now, it can be confirmed that the proposed transfer date is 1 April and, consequently, the savings will be realised in full in 2019/20, with the need, therefore, to bridge 2018/19 savings in the meantime.
- 6.2 The Cabinet is requested to approve re-profiling the leisure facilities' savings for a £157k sum as these savings will not be achieved in 2018-19 as the Healthy Living Company is not in operation until 1 April 2019.
- 6.3 In terms of the field of Housing, a Quarter 2 Review demonstrates a likely over-expenditure of £105k. This is mainly due to a substantial increase in the expenditure of temporary accommodation (bed and breakfast) for the homeless.
- 6.4 As I have already noted in previous reports, the Department has seen:
1. A substantial increase in the numbers who present themselves as homeless following the Housing Act 2014.
 2. An increase in the demand due to the impact of the changes in the benefits system.
 3. A lack of resources, meaning that there is some delay when dealing with the cases and the ability to move them on to more permanent accommodation/or another solution.
- 6.5 I will be working with the Housing Department over the coming weeks to seek a solution to the challenges resulting from the above, and enable them to work within their budget.
- 6.6. There has been some slippage in realising £89,000 of the savings, but the Department is confident that they will be realised before the end of the financial year.
- 6.7 The Likely Expenditure of 2017-18 Capital Plans is £4.1m. This includes £950k on grants for the disabled to adapt their homes (which includes a £150k Government grant); £1.35m on first-time buyer schemes and bringing empty homes back into use; £1.36m on developing the gypsy site in Llandygai (this is funded through a Government Grant); £440k on other matters, including enforcement matters.

7. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 7.1. None to note.

8. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

8.1. Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. Monitoring Officer:

No observations from a propriety perspective

ii. Head of Finance Department:

Please see in my report on the Council's revenue budget review to this meeting, that the Leisure service is overspending this year, with £157,000 of it due to a slippage with part of the leisure facilities savings scheme, as the Byw'n Iach Cyf. company will not be operational until April 2019. I note the Cabinet Member's request in part 2.2 of the report that the Cabinet provided £157,000 of bridging funds in order to re-profile this savings scheme, and his justification for doing so is set out in part 6.1 of the report.

8.2. Views of the Local Member:

8.2.1 Not a local matter.

8.3. Results of Any Consultation:

8.3.1 None to note.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 -

Leisure and
Culture
Performance
Measures

Appendix 2 -

Housing
Performance
Measures

Background Documents:

None.