

# GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



## Report for a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 25th of June 2019  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Craig ab Iago  
**Officer Contact:** Arwel Wyn Owen

**Report Title :** Housing Strategy – Financial Allocation for 2019/20

### 1. DECISION SOUGHT

To avoid losing grant funding and to allow us to persist with existing schemes to approve the release of £1.25m of the Council Tax Premium Fund towards 3 schemes highlighted in appendix 1 during 2019-20.

### 2. REASON THE DECISION IS REQUIRED

We are in the process of completing consultation on the proposed Housing Strategy which will be presented to the Cabinet and the Council over the next months. When adopted the strategy will confirm priorities and a spending plan over the next 5 years. In order to avoid delays and to commence and initiate delivery in certain areas during 2019-20 it is necessary to confirm an allocation of funding for some activities now to ensure we are able to deliver on some priorities.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

The attached table outlines the program and provides details of the individual plans which will be delivered during 2019-2020. Initial effort will concentrate on activity which make a difference in areas that create challenges and initiatives which attract external grant funding.

Schemes within the program create opportunities to attract additional resource from external sources to maximize attainment and to progress existing schemes. We are requesting that the 2019/20 element of the allocation is confirmed to maximize the resource available, to help take advantage of collaborative opportunities which will help make a difference to the people of Gwynedd.

The attached list includes proposals which build and extend previous schemes which have been successful and to increase outputs. In order to fully realize opportunities that arise, an element of flexibility will be required within the themes, to take advantage of emerging opportunities and to maximizing external grant programs.

#### **4. REASON AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION.**

The purpose of this report is to implement an expenditure program and to confirm a firm direction for 2019/20 thereby avoiding delay.

Gwynedd Council has raised additional council tax income by charging a premium on second homes and long term empty properties and has committed that a proportion of the money collected would be allocated to housing initiatives to make a difference in the community.

Appendix 1 proposes 3 early priority schemes for spending a proportion of the money during 2019-20.

The allocation of the remaining resources will be prioritised in the draft Housing Strategy, which will be presented to the Cabinet and the Council for approval over the next months.

#### **5. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

The work program will be implemented on confirmation of funding.

#### **6. CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION**

##### ***Comments of Statutory Officers***

##### ***Chief Finance Officer:***

I have worked with the author to prepare the financial aspects and figures in the Housing Strategy Financial Allocation report and the appendix, and I confirm the accuracy of the relevant content. I believe that it would be reasonable for the Cabinet to approve the release of £ 1.25m from the Council Tax Premium Reserve to start delivering the 3 early priority schemes proposed in the Appendix during 2019-20.

*Monitoring Officer:*

The report notes that that the proposed Housing Strategy is under preparation for decision within the next few months. However, it also acknowledged that the timetable and changes in grant funding mean that there is a case for financing projects to maintain progress. The recommendation protects the Councils position without prejudicing the proposed Housing Strategy.

*Local Member/s:*

Not applicable.

**Consultation**

A copy of the Draft Housing Strategy was presented to the Care Scrutiny Committee on the 28th of March 2019 following an informal discussion with the Scrutiny Committee on the 31st January 2019. The content was adapted to address some observations received and was supported by the Committee.

A copy of the Strategy has also been shared with key partners to help co-ordinate priorities and to ensure that it is possible to achieve within the timeframe. A draft consultation copy was also been placed on the Council's website.

Appendix 1

**INITIATIVES TO BE FUNDED DURING 2019-20**

| SCHEMES ACCORDING TO PRIORITY -THEME          |              | 2019-2020     |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| a. PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS                    | Schemes ( 1) | £300k         |
| b. HELPING FIND A HOME                        | Scheme (2)   | £700k         |
| ch.- HOMES WHICH ARE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY | Scheme (3)   | £250k         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                  |              | <b>£1.25m</b> |

**FUNDING SOURCE FOR 2019-2020**

| Funding Sources                           | 2019-2020<br>(£) |
|---|------------------|
| Council Premium on Second and Empty Homes | 2,700k           |

## LIST OF HOUSING SCHEMES TO BE IMPLEMENTED

| <b>A. ENSURING THAT NO ONE IS HOMELESS IN GWYNEDD</b>                          |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | <b>Title</b>  | <b>Description of Scheme Concept</b>   | <b>Estimate of scheme's cost<br/>Investment sought</b>                            |
| 1.   | <b>Bespoke Accommodation</b><br><br>[PODS Smaller Units]                              | New innovative scheme to provide (modular) accommodation units for single people who do not have a suitable place to live. It will deliver high quality accommodation that is cheap to heat and maintain at an affordable rent. These will provide homes for people where there is no suitable provision and who therefore struggle to secure accommodation.   | <b>Phase 1 - £300k 4 units</b><br><br>(Welsh Government have offered sponsorship) |
| <b>B. ENSURING THAT THE PEOPLE OF GWYNEDD ARE ABLE TO FIND A SUITABLE HOME</b> |   |  |   |
| 2.   | <b>Empty Home Scheme</b><br><br>(First Time Buyers + Landlord Loans)<br><br><6 months | This scheme aims to support landlords and first time buyers to bring long term empty properties back into use .The first time buyer element is an evolution and extension of the traditional Empty Homes scheme where grant assistance or a loan is offered to first-time buyers to maximise the standard of empty properties and to bring property back into use. It address two core priorities, namely assisting first time buyers to secure a foothold in the market and to return empty property back into use. The scheme has attracted a positive response with the demand exceeding the allocated resource. This provides an opportunity to reach more first time buyers. The second element targets landlords to help improve and maximise property standards. Landlords who receive assistance will have to commit to deliver property of high standard and to let the property at an affordable rent for 5 years, and to accept nominations from the Council. | £700k per annum<br><br>45 units<br><br>(Some additional money attracted via VVP)  |
| <b>C. ENSURING THAT GWYNEDD HOMES ARE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY</b>             |   |  |   |
|  | <b>Title</b>  | <b>Description of Scheme Concept</b>   | <b>Estimated Cost of Scheme<br/>Investment sought</b>                             |
| 3.   | <b>Housing Repair Fund</b>  | Scheme to assist vulnerable owners to renovate and improve the condition of their houses. This will assist vulnerable people to retain and maintain their independence by reviewing essential improvements and urgent work to their properties. Some investment can be recovered in the future when property is sold. Extension of the current scheme.   | £250k per annum   |