

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

REPORT TO A MEETING OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

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| Date of Meeting: | 16 July 2019 |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Gareth Thomas, Cabinet Member – Economic Development |
| Contact Officer: | Iwan T. Jones, Corporate Director |
| Contact Telephone Number: | 01286 679685 |
| Title of Item: | Economy Development 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 am responsible as the Cabinet Member for Economic Development. This includes outlining progress against the pledges within the Council Plan; the progress of the performance measures; and the latest in relation to the plans for savings and cuts.
- 1.2 We are now implementing the 2018-23 Council Plan, and I herein report on progress since April to the end of June 2019.
- 1.3 In recent months, emphasis has been placed on the implementation of the projects that form part of the Council's 2018-2023 Plan. I am, generally, satisfied with the performance of most projects and each one is on the right track. I will be elaborating on progress in the report, and will refer to examples of good practice.

2. DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 3.1 In order to ensure effective performance management.

4. COUNCIL PLAN PROJECTS

4.1 Growth Vision for North Wales

- 4.1.1 ***The project's work includes being a pro-active member of the North Wales Ambition Board, and ensuring that Gwynedd benefits fairly from the investment that will be brought into the North Wales region.***

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4.1.2 I am very proud that our Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, is now the Chair of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board.

4.1.3 The Department is continuing to lead on the Trawsfynydd Infrastructure plan, and an Outline Business Case has been submitted to Welsh Government and the UK Government. We are continuing to respond to the feedback of the private sector and Governments, as well as working pro-actively with stakeholders to develop the proposal.

4.2 Create High Value Jobs (£26,500 + salary)

4.2.1 ***This project intends to target sectors that pay well by creating an environment that supports new businesses, grows existing businesses, and ensures that the local workforce is able to take advantage of the opportunities that exist. The project will focus on attracting investment to strategic sites such as the Trawsfynydd Power Station, Llanbedr Airfield and Parc Bryn Cegin/Parc Menai.***

4.2.2 The work continues to attract a new development to the Trawsfynydd site. We are working with Welsh Government to establish a purposeful development entity for the Site to move activities forward.

4.2.3 We are in the process of entering into contracts with the Snowdonia Aerospace Centre to enable the implementation of a programme of improvements to buildings on the site. Work is ongoing with the Snowdonia National Park Authority to ensure Planning Permission to improve access to the site, and thus attracting funding to build a bypass for the village of Llanbedr.

4.2.4 Once again this year, it was great to see local children being welcomed to the Snowdonia Aerospace Centre in Llanbedr as part of the international competition of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE). 80 primary and secondary school pupils from Meirionnydd schools visited; they had an opportunity to speak to competitors from universities all over the world, as well as the opportunity to construct spaceships, fly model aeroplanes, fly a virtual reality aeroplane, etc.

4.2.5 We receive feedback that a number of businesses still face barriers that prevent them from growing; mainly, due to the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, and a lack of sufficient business space.

4.2.6 We are leading on the STEM Gogledd project, the full team is now in place, and engagement work with beneficiaries has commenced. I look forward to reporting on the progress of the project, and the success of the pupils aged 11-19 who are supported through the project.

4.3 Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig Programme

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- 4.3.1 **The purpose of this programme is to build on the good work that has already been done to transform the rural economy by encouraging innovation within traditional sectors (such as agriculture and tourism) as well as improving the digital infrastructure for rural communities.**
- 4.3.2 Work continues with a number of exciting and ground-breaking developments in the pipeline across the County. 37 pilot schemes have been completed by Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig, nearly 300 promotion / information sharing activities have been held, meaning that contact was made with 4,500 Gwynedd residents. Some of the recent highlights include (a host of other examples of the Arloesi work can be seen online):
- the completion of the help for enterprise scheme;
 - the recruitment of communities to trial the use of electric community cars;
 - an investigation into the provision of WiFi around Snowdon;
 - the installation of a local produce vending machine and piloting an activity to regenerate shopping streets.
- 4.3.3 I am pleased to see some of the Leader trials being developed further. Following initial work to raise awareness of the potential of Internet of Things in Gwynedd, a major campaign has been launched across Gwynedd and Anglesey under the banner "A Year of IoT" which will continue with the work and will provide a national profile in the field for the area.
- 4.3.4 Gwynedd Council is leading on the Arfor programme, local structures for leading and managing the plan have been established, and five plans have been identified. Further details on these will be submitted to the Cabinet in a separate report.
- 4.4 **Increase the Benefits from Major Events**
- 4.4.1 ***The purpose of this project is to attract high-profile events to Gwynedd in order to take advantage of the economic and social benefit that will ensue.***
- 4.4.2 There has been a good response to the open call for events in the 2019/20 term. In Quarter 1, one event has succeeded in generating a local economic benefit of £200,428.
- 4.5 **Promoting Town Centres**
- 4.5.1 ***The purpose of this project is to support and facilitate the town centre regeneration to maintain a range of services for local residents and visitors within a lively environment with a Welsh atmosphere.***

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- 4.5.2 The impact of the capital investments valued at £15m to regenerate the Caernarfon Waterfront is becoming increasingly evident in the town. To date, the Caernarfon Waterfront initiative has created 29.5 jobs.
- 4.5.3 The construction work at the Slate Quay is ongoing, and it is expected to be completed by February 2020. It was great to see the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railway Station opening officially on 14 June, with Lord Dafydd Ellis-Thomas there as part of the opening.
- 4.5.4 The initial investment to establish the Business Improvement Area (HWB Caernarfon), has led to the improvement of buildings, establishing a free WiFi network, the colourful umbrellas on Palace Street (as part of the Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig trials), art schemes and discussions to open the Tourist Information Centre. Work is in the pipeline between all partners to develop a marketing package for Caernarfon, to open new markets and to extend the season.
- 4.5.5 We have ensured that Bangor is a regeneration priority for north Wales. If you remember, Bangor was the only eligible destination in Gwynedd. We have received support in principle by the Cabinet for a package of proposed plans as prioritised by the Partnership. A Property Investment fund (£2.16m) has been set up, and considerable interest has been seen in the initial months.
- 4.5.6 The Council is also continuing to offer support to the Business Improvement District in Bangor, but I am becoming increasingly aware of the demand on the business community with regard to managing and leading the system of the Improvement Districts.
- 4.5.7 I am pleased to report that a bid for funding of £2m across north Wales has been approved to implement the Important Buildings plan (Welsh Government's TRI Fund), the plan's areas in Gwynedd are limited to Bangor and Caernarfon as a starting point, work will commence to identify properties and discuss with owners in order to take advantage of the opportunity.
- 4.5.8 The Department is also driving forward with the work of establishing a corporate Regeneration Board and, with this; we will drive forward to further research how we can support the regeneration of a wider range of Gwynedd town centres.

4.6 Implementing the Gwynedd Slate Heritage

- 4.6.1 ***The purpose of the project is to deliver a programme of regeneration activities in the slate areas, and continue to work to secure a World Heritage Site status for the slate industry in Gwynedd.***

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4.6.2 We have agreed on a timetable with DCMS in order to present the Gwynedd Slate nomination to UNESCO in November 2019, and the decision will be announced in July 2021. A report will be submitted to the Cabinet in October in order to agree on the plan.

4.6.3 A programme of community activities are ongoing, including a young ambassadors' scheme that is run in partnership with the Welsh Slate Museum. 14 Young Ambassadors aged between 12 and 18 have been appointed as part of the LleCHI scheme across Gwynedd.

4.7 Benefiting from Tourism

4.7.1 ***The purpose of this project is to look at the possibility of getting visitors to contribute financially to maintaining and enhancing Gwynedd destinations and raising the standards of the tourism sector. By doing so, we will improve the provision of the county's destinations and increase the standard of the provision for the tourist industry.***

4.7.2 An expert was commissioned to scrutinise the field and report on potential models to move forward and the required implementation structures. A draft report on the options has been submitted to the Project Board, and this will be the basis of the report for the Cabinet in future.

4.8 Businesses receiving support to Prosper

4.8.1 ***The purpose of the project is to establish a way of working within the Council that places the needs of businesses at the centre, and attempts to remove obstacles that prevent them from establishing and growing in the county.***

4.8.2 I am glad to report that an initial meeting of the Project Board has been arranged to move this project forward, to discuss and agree on the brief and project plan.

4.9 More Gwynedd residents playing a full part in the world of work

4.9.1 ***The purpose of this project is to focus on a series of activities that will encourage Gwynedd residents into employment.***

4.9.2 The Gwaith Gwynedd (Gwynedd Work) employment pack is still supporting individuals to overcome obstacles to employment. So far, 261 individuals have received a relevant qualification/accreditation for work, and 105 have moved into employment.

4.9.3 As part of the project, work is done to collaborate with employers and services within the Council in order to ensure that the programme meets the needs, following discussions with the Provider Service, a Care Career booklet has been

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developed, and hopefully there will be a follow-up to this with a training package.

5. MEASURING PERFORMANCE

5.1 **Appendix 1** reports on performance measures that are associated with my portfolio.

5.2 Although it is early in the year, I am satisfied that the department is on the right track in terms of performance measures.

5.3 The department collects field measures (where more than one service feeds into the measure) and measures for each service.

5.4 Field Measures

5.4.1 Businesses that receive support - During Quarter 1, 75 businesses have received support by the Department, and 59% (44) of those derive from Tourism and Marketing activity.

5.4.2 High Value Jobs have been created - During Q1, five high value jobs were created by the Smart Storm company in Parc Menai.

5.5 Service Measures

5.5.1 The vast majority of the **Economic Development Programmes Service** resources are directed to implementing the Council Plan's projects, with attention also being given to connected strategic matters and their delivery, such as improving connectivity in the county, or matters that could be a risk to achieve priorities such as Brexit and the uncertainty about UK funding in future.

5.5.2 The **Business Support Service** provides information, advice and assistance to businesses for them to establish, be competitive and develop in Gwynedd. The service is responsible for implementing, managing and promoting loan funds such as the Caernarfon Town Centre Loans Fund and the Bangor Area Fund.

5.5.3 Once again this year, the Gwynedd Business Week was held in May 2019, with a range of business events being organised, as well as the business awards' ceremony. It was great to see very positive feedback to all events.

5.5.4 One of the local priorities of the Council Plan is to promote and regenerate the High Street in Dyffryn Ogwen and Dyffryn Nantlle; an Interest Free Loans Fund is operational in Bethesda and Penygroes.

5.5.5 The '**Business enquiries acted upon**' measure shows that the number of business enquiries has fallen (26 in quarter 1) in comparison to previous years due to a lack of financial schemes. A marketing campaign to raise awareness of the

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Town Centre Loan Funds, and the new grant scheme for Bangor City Centre and the Help for Enterprise Pack is part of the Arfor Programme's provision in Gwynedd.

- 5.5.6 The '**Council owned industrial / commercial space that are full**' measure reveals that 94% of our industrial units are full. This is a reduction from the previous quarter, but marketing work is in progress to attempt to let the vacant units.
- 5.5.7 The purpose of the **Tourism, Marketing and Events Service** is to maximise the benefit and value of tourists to Gwynedd's economy. The new Snowdonia Mountains and Coast website (<https://www.visitsnowdonia.info/>) is now live, and we have already seen the number of hits rise by 9.9% in the first quarter.
- 5.5.8 Funding from Visit Wales' Regional Tourism Engagement Fund (RTEF) was secured to fund two projects, namely to promote areas outside the main season, namely the Coastal Path jointly with Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion Councils, and the other, North Road, jointly with the North Wales Local Councils.
- 5.5.9 The purpose of the **Maritime and Country Parks Service** is to ensure quality safe resources in our Country Parks, Harbours, and Marinas and on the beaches of Gwynedd in order to create a leisure destination for local people and tourists.
- 5.5.10 Work is continuing on the management of Hafan Pwllheli, and a further report will be submitted to the Cabinet in due course.
- 5.5.11 I am eager to see forward planning within the Maritime Service in order to attract more people into the field. I see an opportunity to research opportunities such as apprenticeships. A Report will be submitted to the Cabinet on the matter in due course.
- 5.5.12 It is disappointing to report that there are now only six International Blue Flag beaches in Gwynedd, as Aberdaron and Tywyn lost their banners because the standard of their bathing waters had not reached the required standard in 2018.
- 5.5.13 The purpose of the **Libraries and Information Service** is to ensure that Gwynedd residents have access to support, resources and information that gives them the opportunity to learn and acquire skills, read and enjoy. It is very encouraging to learn that 99% of users are satisfied with the service they receive.
- 5.5.14 A company has been appointed in order to complete the work of reconditioning the Caernarfon Library Storage shelves, and it is aimed to complete the work before the end of November 2019.
- 5.5.15 Following a successful application for a Libraries' Transformation Grant through MALD for £120,000, work will be carried out to enhance facilities and resources in Pwllheli Library.

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- 5.5.16 A Coding Club for Children was held at Pwllheli Library in co-operation with Coleg Meirion Dwyfor, where a number of students from the college volunteered to support children with their coding skills.
- 5.5.17 The **Museums and Arts Service** runs two museums in Gwynedd and is responsible for the collections and creating exhibitions at both, namely: Storiel and the Lloyd George Museum.
- 5.5.18 The Friends of the Lloyd George Museum have worked with the Lloyd George Museum in order to commission a Co-ordinator. Legal issues have arisen with the Lloyd George Museum, and a report will be submitted to the Leadership Team with regards to the Council's role as a Trustee.
- 5.5.19 I am concerned about Storiel's financial situation following the end of the Lottery funding. Storiel had a £72k overspend at the end of the 2018/19 financial year, this was a combination of staff overspend and income deficit. I have asked officers to revisit Storiel's Business Plan in future.
- 5.5.20 The process of establishing and registering Storiel's Development Trust has commenced. Initial work will commence soon in order to make a HLF application and look at the business elements, raise funds as well as the learning and community elements.
- 5.5.21 Since the closure of Neuadd Buddug, the digital equipment has been transferred to the Derek Williams Theatre on the Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn site, so that the community group can provide theatre and cinema services there. A Community Co-ordinator has been appointed, and Friends of the Derek Williams Theatre has been established. This is the beginning of a new era for the arts in Bala.
- 5.5.22 The service hold regular meetings with the Libraries Service and the theatre/cinema to consider the vision for Neuadd Dwyfor.
- 5.5.23 The Museums and Arts Service as well as some other services will be reviewing the purpose and measures as Ffordd Gwynedd reviews and changes take place in light of savings / income targets and restructuring.
- 5.5.24 The purpose of the **Archives Service** is to protect our public records and ensure that people have access to them, by providing two Archives in Gwynedd.
- 5.5.25 The descriptions of the Archives Service's conclusion is now available on the *Archives Hub*, and this has attracted many enquiries.
- 5.5.26 Following discussions over some years with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and North Wales Archives, arrangements are in the pipeline to begin transferring health documents in order to comply with statutory duties.

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- 5.5.27 The Education Officer has held sessions at Ysgol y Felinheli and Ysgol Maeonofferen as part of the LleCHI project in order to show quarry materials that will be used to inspire the children to create artwork.
- 5.5.28 We anticipate opportunities arising, given the new curriculum and the potential role for Education Officers, Archives and Museums.
- 5.5.29 The **Supporting Communities Service** supports people and local enterprises to play a key role in the regeneration process. The newly reformed service will be promoted across Gwynedd over the coming months.
- 5.5.30 The Cist Gwynedd fund is valuable to the County's voluntary groups. The first round has been held, and all funds have been allocated, which reflects the need for small grants to support communities and the third sector.
- 5.5.31 The **Sports for Life Service** offers a range of inclusive physical activities. The Secondary Ambassadors programme has ended for the year, but the qualified Ambassadors receive opportunities to lead sessions and be part of events across Gwynedd.
- 5.5.32 Work is being carried out to target the participation of specific groups. A taster day was arranged for women only as part of the GGG plan as part of the North Wales Slalom (part of the Wales canoeing talent path) and, as a result, the weekly sessions in Llanberis are full, with the intention of starting new sessions.
- 5.5.33 26 regularly attend the Active Family Fitness sessions on Tuesday evenings in Maesgeirchen. Through the Playmakers and DIT scheme, and with the co-operation of the Sport for Life Team Officer and the Disabilities Development Officer, 350 children have received training, which expands on the dinner time physical activity provision at schools.
- 5.5.34 The 2019 Snowdonia Challenge was a great success and a two-day Outdoors competition for further education colleges in Wales was held in Llanberis, and was led by the Gwynedd Outdoor Activities Development Officer.
- 5.5.35 The Economy and Community Department has awarded a contract to the **Byw'n lach company** to manage the Healthy Living Centres from 1 April 2019. The Council will meet with the company during July in order to monitor the progress of quarter 1

6. FINANCIAL/SAVINGS SITUATION

- 6.1 Five of the 2019/20 savings schemes have either been realised or are on track to be realised on time before the end of the financial year.
- 6.2 The parking order will be introduced at a number of sites across Council Departments, including the three parking plans, namely *Reconciling parking fees through introducing parking fees for new sites (e.g. the Glyn area)*,

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establishing parking fees in Dinas Dinlle and increasing launching fees and also Reviewing fees and arrangements in Storiel. Preparation work is currently underway in terms of proposals to incorporate a number of new sites into the Gwynedd Parking Order. There is also an intention to update the Council's fee structure to be in-keeping with the work, and an application has also been made to incorporate additional aspects (e.g. cards for locals).

- 6.3 The plan to increase *launching fees on Gwynedd beaches* will be postponed due to the need to have a plan to manage security risks for staff, as the risk of violent behaviour is increasing.
- 6.4 In terms of *Neuadd Dwyfor* we see substantial risks to achieving savings. The Department is developing a business case, and a substantial capital investment will be required to realise the savings. Additionally, financiers such as the Arts Council, Visit Wales, and others will need to be ascertained. I will present a report to the Leadership Team with the details.
- 6.5 The new Leisure Company must be given an opportunity to establish itself before identifying opportunities to move the status from amber to green on the plan to *Reduce the subsidy for the new Leisure Company*

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 to add with regards to propriety.

ii. **Head of Finance Department:**

The report notes the situation of the Economy and Community Department in terms of realising the savings schemes, with five of the 2019/20 savings schemes having already been realised or on track to being realised on time, and the risk involved with the other plans having been noted in part 6 of the report. Finance officers will assist the responsible Cabinet Member in monitoring the progress against these schemes, and we will be in a position to further report on the progress following the next financial review.

We have already highlighted a concern regarding Storiel's financial situation in our '2018/19 Final Accounts – Revenue Outturn' that was submitted to Cabinet on 21/6/19, with Storiel overspending by £72k at the end of the 2018/19 financial year. It is vital that the Economy and Community Department takes appropriate steps to manage this situation.

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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 Measures of the Economy & Community Department
(Economy Development)**

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