

## **Communities Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 26 September 2019**

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Elfed Robets (Chair)

**COUNCILLORS:** Glyn Daniels, Elwyn Edwards, Simon Glyn, Annwen Hughes, Aled W Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Elwyn Jones, Dafydd Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Angela Russell, Owain Williams and Gruffydd Williams

**OFFICERS:**

Vera Jones (Democratic and Language Services Manager), Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Advisor) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

In relation to item 5 on the agenda - Councillor Gareth Griffith (Cabinet Member for the Environment), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department) and Rhian Williams (Integrated Transport Manager)

In relation to item 6 on the agenda - Councillor Gareth Griffith (Cabinet Member for the Environment) and Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department)

In relation to item 7 on the agenda - Councillor Gareth Griffith (Cabinet Member for the Environment), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department), Gareth Jones (Senior Planning and Public Protection Manager) and Rebeca Jones (Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit Manager)

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Stephen Churchman, Kevin Morris Jones, Linda Morgan, Mike Stevens and Gethin Glyn Williams

**2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

None to note

**3. URGENT ITEMS**

None to note

**4. MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 4.07.2019, were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**5. STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICE**

The Head of Environment Department presented a progress report on the work of reviewing the public transport provision in Gwynedd along with the next steps the Department would be implementing. It was noted that the review gave the Council the opportunity to trial alternative ways of addressing transport needs. It was reiterated that

the existing network had not been developed for decades and there was no evidence that the service had been comprehensively reviewed during this time. It was noted that Transport for Wales would assist in delivering the provision with the vision that Traws Cymru would provide the main transport corridor, with a dependence on local services providing the connections.

It was highlighted that time and effort would be invested to gather information in order to ensure that decisions were based on need and prioritised based on their social value. Information was gathered via a questionnaire and 2021 responses were received. It was reported that the initial work to analyse the responses had been completed and would form the foundation for the next steps

- review the suitability of the existing transport network
- ensure that the service meets the need in the most cost effective way
- prioritise the journeys/routes based on their social value (work commissioned by Bangor University)

In response to an observation by Councillor Gruffydd Williams that the Dwyfor Councillor, in response to a previous review, had requested that the service be protected from cuts and that people be supported to live in the countryside, the Head of Environment Department stated that there was no intention to cut the public transport budget. He reiterated that despite the challenges to maintain the service, the main aim was to meet the need in the most cost effective way.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- The strategic review and vision for improving use in the hope that the public transport service would be improved was welcomed.
- The information gathering systems had been appropriate and that the response to the questionnaires had been encouraging - need to build on this and analyse the data to meet the need
- The consideration to use fewer large buses was welcomed - this was a constructive step forward
- Need to ensure that the dial a service arrangements were flexible; that there were solutions to every situation. Suggestion to trial the arrangements to ensure success
- Need to explain and discuss any changes that were being considered with residents in their communities - suggestion to share the information in the local papers
- Effective marketing arrangements needed
- Need to collaborate and support local services, e.g. O Ddrws i Ddrws. Was it possible to use a concessionary travel card on local services?
- Need to consider the carbon footprint - encourage people to use buses
- Need to ensure that priority was given to the journey not the vehicle/resource
- If using smaller vehicles, the impact on large bus companies would have to be considered
- Need to ensure concessionary travel card holders got all the support they needed to renew their cards by 1/1/2020

In response to an observation about the impact on bus companies, it was highlighted that the large buses would be the mainstay of the service with smaller vehicles feeding into that service.

In response to a comment about renewing concessionary travel cards, it was highlighted that the Department was making every effort to support Transport for Wales in administering the work of card renewal. It was reiterated that the

service's officers were holding meetings across the county, were responding to telephone enquiries, and were offering advice and guidance on how to renew a card on paper or on-line. It was noted that the new concessionary card was safer and prevented fraud.

**RESOLVED:**

- **To accept the report and congratulate the Department on the consultation work carried out to gather residents' opinions**
- **Recommend that the service consider the long term impact of cutting services in rural areas**
- **Recommend that the service ensure flexibility in its new arrangements e.g. ensure that the 'Dial on Demand' service is flexible and that the vehicles are adequately sized to address the need**
- **Recommend that the service consider collaborating with local companies / other services**
- **Recommend the need to market the new service effectively**
- **Recommend that the environmental impact be considered as part of the review**

**6. ESTABLISH A PARKING MANAGEMENT TASK GROUP**

The Head of Environment Department presented a report containing terms of reference and an outline work plan for the Communities Scrutiny Committee Task group to assist the Service with the work of analysing a range of options for managing parking in Gwynedd. It was highlighted that the intention was to assess the possible options to increase the income from car parks and consider whether this could be done without increasing costs for Gwynedd residents.

Members were reminded that four members had been elected to the Task Group at the meeting of the Committee on 4 July 2019 - Councillors Kevin Morris Jones (Arfon), Angela Russell (Dwyfor), Annwen Hughes and Gethin Glyn Williams (Meirionnydd).

**APPROVED - The terms of reference and outline work programme for the Task Group**

**7. JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT August 2017 - March 2019**

The Assistant Head of Environment Department presented a report requesting that Members provide comments on the key findings of the Annual Monitoring Report (Draft) before submission to the Joint Planning Policy Committee, the Cabinet and then Welsh Government.

It was explained that the monitoring report was an important evidence base for reviewing the Local Development Plan. Over time, the monitoring report could show trends, identify any policies that were delivering and those that were not, and highlight any gaps or policy shortcomings. It was noted that the Local Development Plan had a monitoring framework that had been agreed with the Inspector during the Inspection - it was reiterated that the framework contained 69 indicators that reported on the five themes in the Plan.

Reference was made to the key conclusions of the monitoring report and it was reported, in considering these, that there was no evidence that the Plan should be reviewed early. A review of the Plan would be held in 2021 unless an annual monitoring report noted otherwise.

Thanks were given for the information.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- A suggestion to present the total number of houses built each year in order to provide context for the report
- A straightforward, comprehensible "executive summary" was needed that summarised and somewhat simplified the technical and factual information
- The increase in holiday homes needed to be brought under control as a result of the construction of new houses. Although aware that the Cabinet had approved research that could lead to changes in legislation, it was suggested that a link was needed between the annual monitoring review and the research work
- The review should monitor new builds and not the housing stock
- The number of houses needed to be revised following the Wylfa B decision. Many of the designations were no longer necessary
- Need to improve coordination between economic development and housing developments
- Need to consider the term 'local people'. Other countries such as Italy were developing houses for local people only - a suggestion to look in greater detail at similar schemes
- The Welsh language must be given due consideration with every development and not only when constructing houses
- Necessary to consider how to measure the impact on the Welsh language
- Propose that language statements be completed by suitably approved experts - suggestion that the Council provide guidance on those competent to carry out language statements
- Suggestion to establish, within the year, a working group in order to further challenge and generate more detailed analyses
- Who would respond on behalf of the Council to the consultation on the National Framework by 1 November 2019?

In response to a comment about the suggestion that language statements should be carried out by accredited experts, the Joint Planning Policy Unit Manager stated that the Supplementary Planning Guidance, Maintaining and Creating Unique and Sustainable Communities, which contained guidance on planning and the Welsh language, referred to the need for the statements to be made by a qualified individual. It was acknowledged that the guidance contained new information for everyone and that sessions would be held for Members and separately for agents, as many had expressed an interest. It was reiterated that it would be beneficial for external experts/agents to attend information sharing sessions, such as those offered to Members. As regards the suggestion that the Council should prepare language statements and assessments, it was emphasised that the Council's role as the Local Planning Authority was to assess planning applications and all associated assessment, not to prepare parts of planning applications on behalf of developers.

In response to a question about responding to a consultation on the National Framework, it was reported that the Policy Unit was coordinating a response in consultation with the Economy Department, the Language Unit and other departments. It was highlighted that a draft response had been drawn up and that the Leadership Team had requested a workshop to have an in-depth discussion about the details. The Cabinet Member added that the Cabinet would consider the response.

In response to a comment about the D2 indicator (approving planning applications where Welsh language mitigation measures are needed) 'that no applications had been approved since adopting the plan, where measures would be required to mitigate any significant harm to the Welsh language'. It was explained, since no harm had been

identified in the language statements, that there was no planning justification for imposing mitigation measures. It was reiterated that the Policy Unit and the Language Unit had deduced and assessed the statements and that mitigation measures would only be imposed if the evidence confirmed this.

**The report was welcomed.**

#### **RESOLVED**

- **There is a need to consider the language assessment and language statement arrangements in greater detail. It was suggested that an informal meeting should be held with Committee members to share information or to establish a working group of Members and Officers to challenge all elements and for further analysis. If a working group were established, it was suggested that a member of the Language Committee should be invited to become a member of the working group.**
- **Although accepting that the report had to include factual and technical information, it was suggested that the form in which the written report is presented should be simplified.**
- **Highlight concerns about the future of Wylfa and the housing designations that have since become unnecessary.**
  - **A need to revise the numbers**
  - **A need to ensure that planning permissions addressed the need**
- **Economic developments could be better coordinated with housing developments**
- **That there is an opportunity to look at what other countries are doing in the context of housing for local people**
- **That every member is required to raise awareness of the consultation being held on the National Framework (closing date 1.11.19)**

The meeting commenced at 10.15am and concluded at 12:20pm