

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Date of meeting: 21 January 2020
Cabinet Member: Councillor Gareth Thomas
Contact Officer: Dilwyn Williams, Chief Executive
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Title of Item: Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

1 THE DECISION SOUGHT

1.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

2 THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

2.1 In order to ensure effective performance management.

3 INTRODUCTION

3.1 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 the latest regarding the pledges within the Council Plan; the progress of the performance measures; and the latest in relation to the plan for savings and cuts.

3.2 We are implementing the 2018-23 Council Plan, and I herein report on progress to the end of November 2019.

3.3 I would like to remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussion and have been scrutinised by me at a Performance Challenge meeting which also included representatives from the Scrutiny Committee.

3.4 On the whole, I am satisfied with the department's performance. I will elaborate on progress within the report.

4 THE RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

4.1 PERFORMANCE OF DEPARTMENT SERVICES

4.2 Libraries and Information Service

4.2.1 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 acquire skills, read and enjoy. It is very positive to report that Customer Service Satisfaction is 99% (see M1), this is the feedback from one Library user *'This Service is essential for my well-being and life progress. Without*

this service I would be under a huge disadvantage, and would lose a valuable asset of being able to read books.'

- 4.2.2 National book loaning patterns have reduced, this is also generally true for north Wales and Gwynedd, up to now 215,719 books have been loaned this year, an average of 35,846 a month (which is lower than the monthly average of 38,789 in 2018/19). As a result, Workshop sessions are organised to look at how the Libraries Service can support other Council services and other agencies in our communities in the future.
- 4.2.3 The Libraries Service offers a number of services, and recently our Libraries have offered assistance to people over 60 who needed to renew their bus passes. 5,440 people benefited from this assistance as the Government had adopted a completely digital registration process.
- 4.2.4 The Welsh Public Libraries Standards 2018/19 give an encouraging picture of Gwynedd Libraries. Of the 10 quality indicators with targets, Gwynedd had achieved 9 in full and 1 partly, Gwynedd was one of only four Authorities to attain this level.

4.3 Archives Service

- 4.3.1 The purpose of the Archives Service is to protect our public records and ensure that people have access to them, by providing two Record Offices in Gwynedd.
- 4.3.2 The use and demand for the service is good, with 8,900 having used the service to date which compares well with previous years, 95% report that they are satisfied with the service received (see M2). A small percentage are dissatisfied with the service as a result of the reduction in opening hours.
- 4.3.3 It was a busy time for the Education Officers in the Archives service, and they worked with 1,214 primary pupils. We receive very positive feedback for the service, recently Year 3 pupils at Ysgol Dolbadarn enjoyed a session and one pupil remarked *'We have learnt a great deal about the Tudors. The costumes were very beautiful, and looked very nice. The games were very interesting then. You are welcome to come back to see us at any time.'* The education service is essential with the coming of the new Curriculum, I have asked the Economy Department and the Education Department to organise a meeting to discuss maintaining the service in the future.
- 4.3.4 The Archives Service has collaborated across the Region to commence the work of digitalising the collection, but due to recruitment difficulties the work has come to an end. Despite this, I am eager for Gwynedd to continue with the digitalisation of our collection to ensure the service's future viability. Therefore, I have requested that the Service seeks to give an estimate of the cost and time-table for the digitalisation of our collection in Gwynedd - this will enable us to investigate the possibilities of commencing the work.

4.4 Museums and Arts Service

- 4.4.1 The purpose of the Museums and Arts Service is to enrich the lives of the people of Gwynedd by promoting an understanding of our unique culture.
- 4.4.2 In order to ensure that Neuadd Dwyfor offers the best possible experience to Gwynedd residents, work is afoot to identify a vision and a future business model. A team of users has been established to consult with local residents. Discussions

will take place with the team of users and staff to look at the vision, identify the demand and to identify any barriers and opportunities. I will present a business case to the Cabinet in January.

- 4.4.3 It is a matter of concern to me that Storiell continues to overspend as a service and that additional income targets are set. The service is currently reviewing the management arrangements as well as the operational structure to urgently respond to this.

4.5 Maritime and Country Parks Service

- 4.5.1 The purpose of the Maritime and Country Parks Service is to ensure quality, safe resources in our country parks, harbours, marinas and on the beaches of Gwynedd in order to create a leisure attractions for local people and visitors. To date, 40 persons have received first aid on Gwynedd beaches, I will keep an eye on this data in order to compare this with previous years (see M3). This is one of the service measures, I have asked the department to consider the best way to measure quality within the service, I will update you on this in the future.
- 4.5.2 The situation regarding dredging continues to be problematic at Pwllheli, there is currently a contract out on Sell2Wales to appoint a company to remove sand and mud. Work to undertake a management review of Pwllheli Harbour and Hafan has commenced, and I will present a report to the Cabinet soon in order to prepare a Development Plan for Pwllheli Harbour and Hafan.

4.6 Sports for Life Service

- 4.6.1 The Sports for Life Service offers a range of inclusive physical activities for Primary, Secondary and for the community.
- 4.6.2 Very good work is undertaken with primary age children via the 'Clwb Dal i Fynd', Play Maker and DIT. The 'Clwb Dal i Fynd' continues to be held in 80% of the schools. with teachers reporting that the club improves pupil fitness. Every Secondary School in Gwynedd receives a 560 provision that offers over 20 different Sports to pupils. and is an excellent way of getting children to attend fitness sessions.
- 4.6.3 The Economy and Community Department has awarded a contract to Byw'n Iach company to manage the Healthy Living Centres, by the end of quarter 2 there had been 566,427 visits to the Centres with a customer satisfaction level of 87.34%.

4.7 Regeneration Programmes Unit

- 4.7.1 The purpose of the Regeneration Programmes Unit is to develop, coordinate, implement and monitor regeneration work programmes in order to create a better Gwynedd to live in, in response to the Gwynedd Regeneration Strategy.
- 4.7.2 Historically, the unit's work derives from funding opportunities, I am eager to ensure that a long term plan is in place for regeneration, and the Regeneration Board is already operating to develop an understanding of the regeneration needs of Gwynedd communities in order that we have a clearer cross-service vision of what is needed to ensure stronger communities (there will be a separate report on Regeneration Board activities).
- 4.7.3 The purpose of the Promoting Town Centres project is to support and promote the regeneration of town centres to maintain a range of services for local residents and visitors within a lively, Welsh atmosphere. The main draft plan has been

prepared for Bangor to look at mobility and links within the city, there will be further discussions between officers and consultants on the draft plan, I will report back on the plan in the future.

- 4.7.4 The purpose of Implementing the Gwynedd Slate Heritage 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. A new timetable has been agreed with DCMS and the nomination will be submitted to UNESCO in January 2020, and the decision will be announced in July 2021.

4.8 **Supporting Communities Service**

- 4.8.1 The Supporting Communities Service support communities, be they a Community Council, voluntary Group or a community entity to act to make their communities a better place to live.

- 4.8.2 During the last quarter the service has supported 22 projects/activities. These included working on a scheme to transfer the former Ysgol Beuno Sant building to the community to establish a Family Centre in the town of Bala, working with Plas Carmel on a scheme to restore a Chapel, Chapel House and former shop, merging history, culture and the local environment and bringing economic and social benefits to the Community.

4.9 **Economic Development Programmes Service**

- 4.9.1 The Economic Development Programmes Service seeks to improve conditions for businesses to thrive in Gwynedd, to support them to get established, compete and grow and assist the people of Gwynedd to make the most of the opportunities. The service leads on a number of the improvement priorities in the Council's Plan.
- 4.9.2 To date in 2019/20, 204 enterprises have received support (see M5), which is an increase on last year as a result of extending the provision and increase in demand due to external factors such as Brexit.
- 4.9.3 The businesses receiving support to prosper project ensures a way of working within the Council that places the needs of businesses at the centre, and to reduce obstacles for them to establish and grow in the county. In order to have a better understanding of what is being done across all Council services, an analysis of the responses will be reported to the Project Board in January 2020.
- 4.9.4 The purpose of the project is that more Gwynedd residents will play a full part in the world of work focusing on a series of activities that will encourage all Gwynedd residents into employment. The project has supported over 93 people into employment (see M7). There is close collaboration with businesses in the tourism sector, including Hafan y Môr and Zip World. By working together, efforts will be made to ensure that local residents have an opportunity to benefit from employment opportunities with the companies. It is very positive to report that over 300 jobs will be available between two companies in Gwynedd over the next few months.
- 4.9.5 The Rural Development Programme builds on the good work which 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. The Arfor scheme is now up and running, the programme is an experimental fund that aims to create more and better jobs in the strongholds of the Welsh language and as a result support the language. Arfor

includes four local plans, one of these is the Enterprising Communities Challenge, where three communities (Llanystumdwy, Bethesda and Bala) have been recruited to trial methods to motivate the cyclic / basic economy. Two maker spaces have also been opened under Arfor, on the high street in Porthmadog and in Bethesda and they have already welcomed over 140 residents to come and learn about new technology. I will report on Arfor outcomes in the future.

- 4.9.6 The project to Create High Value Jobs (£26,500 + salary) seeks to create an environment that supports new businesses and the growth of existing businesses within the sectors that pay well, and to ensure that the local workforce can benefit from the opportunities. 20 high value jobs have been created thus far by enterprises that have received support this year (see M6). The Council's efforts to support employment at the Trawsfynydd site by continuing with decommissioning the site appears to be bearing fruit and work is proceeding to develop a space for over 150 jobs at Llanbedr airfield.

One additional issue that continues to demand the attention and efforts of officers and Members is Brexit. The Department continues to seek the views of local businesses about the impact of Brexit and to encourage them to take advantage of all the support, however, the uncertainty has a detrimental impact on the willingness of enterprises to invest and create jobs. Officers and Members are also pro-active expressing the views and needs of Gwynedd, particularly regarding future investment to develop the economy and to support farmers and rural areas once European funding has ended.

4.10 Tourism, Marketing and Events Service

- 4.10.1 The purpose of the Tourism, Marketing and Events Service is to promote the area as an all year round destination and work with the sector to maximise economic benefits for the people of Gwynedd. We have seen growth in this field over the last few years with more people going on holiday within the UK. The performance review has been completed to input into the process of setting priorities for the period 2020+.
- 4.10.2 The project to Increase the Benefits from Major Events aims to attract high-profile events to Gwynedd in order to take advantage of the economic and social benefit which will ensue. During 2019/20, 25 events have been supported through the project (see M4). Discussions are already underway with new events for next year, I will present a report to the Cabinet making an application for funding for this fund in 2020/21.
- 4.10.3 The purpose of the project Benefiting from Tourism is to reinforce Gwynedd's status as a sustainable destination of international quality, by researching and implementing the best option to ensure that Gwynedd's residents and businesses benefit from the tourists that visit the County. Several scrutiny sessions of this field have been undertaken and a workshop will take place jointly between Council Members and Snowdonia National Park Members early in 2020, to discuss the field and our future priorities.

5 FINANCIAL SITUATION / SAVINGS

5.1 Savings Schemes 2017/18, 2018/19 & 2019/20

- 5.1.1 There is a delay in the three parking schemes, namely Reconciling parking fees through introducing parking fees for new sites (e.g. the Glyn area), Establishing

parking fees in Dinas Dinlle and increasing launching fees and also Reviewing fees and arrangements at Storiell. Preparatory 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). It is anticipated that additional income will be received by increasing Launching Fees and Parking Income at Storiell by the start of the 2020/21 financial year.

- 5.1.2 There is a delay with another two schemes, namely Increase the fee to schools for the archives service and Delete one post from the Tourism Service, however, they are moving forward.
- 5.1.3 Regarding the Neuadd Dwyfor scheme the department anticipates some significant risks to achieve the savings. The Department is continuing to develop the business case as noted in 4.4.2 and a substantial capital investment ('investment to save') will be required to realise the savings. In addition, discussions will need to take place with funding bodies such as the Arts Council, Visit Wales and others - however, they do not currently appear to have any obvious funds. I have emphasised the need to ensure that the business case put forward is one that is likely to be realised.
- 5.1.4 The new Leisure Company must be given an opportunity to establish itself before identifying opportunities to move the status to amber or green on the plan *Reduce the subsidy for the new Leisure Company* Therefore, it is likely that the scheme will slip past 2021/22 - 2022-23.

6 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

6.1 Views of the Statutory Officers:

The Monitoring Officer

"No comments to add regarding propriety."

The Head of Finance Department

"I can confirm the accuracy of the financial aspects in the report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Community, with part 5 of the report highlighting the risks relating to some savings projects. Finance Officers will continue to assist the Cabinet Member in monitoring the progress against these schemes, and an update on the department's financial situation has been included in the financial review which is the subject of the report by the Cabinet Member for Finance on this meeting's agenda."

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1

Economy Department Measures