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**COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 24.02.15**

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**1. PRESENT** - Councillor Angela Russell (Chair)

Councillors:- Stephen Churchman, Annwen Daniels, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, Eric M Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, W Tudor Owen, Caerwyn Roberts, Mike Stevens, Gruffydd Williams, Robert J Wright.

**OFFICERS:** Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager - Corporate Commissioning Service) and Lowri Haf Evans (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**ALSO PRESENT:**

- i) In relation to item 6 on the agenda - Catherine Roberts (Delivery Manager - Community Safety) and Inspector Mark Armstrong (North Wales Police)
- ii) In relationship to item 7 on the agenda - Councillor Dafydd Meurig - Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Jason Humphreys (Local Member - Porthmadog East), Mr Aled Davies (Head of Regulatory Department) and Mr Iwan Evans (Legal Service Manager)
- iii) In relation to item 8 on the agenda - Councillor John Wynn Jones - Cabinet Member for the Environment, Mr Gwyn Morris Jones (Head of Highways and Municipal Department) and Mr Steffan Jones (Senior Waste and Commissioning Manager)
- iv) In relation to item 9 on the agenda - Councillor Mair Rowlands - Cabinet Member for Leisure and Mr Ian Jones (Senior Development Manager - Economy and Community)

**APOLOGIES:**

An apology had been received from Councillor Llywarch Bowen Jones. Councillor Annwen Davies was welcomed to her first meeting of this committee.

**2. VICE-CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED to elect Councillor Caerwyn Roberts as Vice-chair of this Scrutiny Committee for 2014/15.**

**3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

**4. URGENT ITEMS**

None to note

**5. MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 2 December 2014, were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

## 6. ANNUAL UPDATE OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Catherine Roberts (Delivery Manager – Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety) and Inspector Mark Armstrong (North Wales Police) were welcomed to the meeting.

- a.) An update was provided on the work of the Community Safety Partnership. It was explained that the Partnership was required to formally report to the Committee on an annual basis providing an overview of the Partnership's main strategic developments over the year. This ensured that the Partnership delivered its obligations in accordance with sections of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2006.
- b.) In response to observations that had been directed towards the Partnership following a preparatory meeting of the committee, an information sheet and specific details of the main crime areas in Gwynedd were distributed. It was noted that the police was concentrating on the locations where the most crimes occurred. In situations of re-offending, it was expressed that the Integrated Offending Management Scheme provided support for individuals to change their way of life.
- c.) In response to concern regarding the increase in sexual offences, it was noted that specific work was being undertaken to encourage people to report such crimes. In light of specific media attention to cases amongst famous people of the TV world, it appeared that this had encouraged others to come forward. It was highlighted that changes to the reporting method had been implemented over the last decade and in response to the increase it was reported that the Chief Inspector for North Wales was arranging a summit conference to consider specific investigations and the sharing of information.
- ch.) A request was made to report on criminal damage and arson offences as two separate matters. The observation was accepted.
- d.) In response to a question regarding charging for shopping bags, it was expressed that there was no evidence that this caused more theft in shops. The fact that close work was being undertaken with supermarkets was reiterated, and in light of the changes to benefits, it was noted that stealing food had not increased.
- dd.) It was accepted that the financial climate affected the police's work and the fact that the cuts had been difficult was acknowledged. However, it was reported that the situation had improved by now and that good collaboration was being developed with Partners. It was also reported that an increase in the use of information technology by the service ensured that the police were in the right place at the right time. It was highlighted that the police were collaborating with communities to aim to stop antisocial behaviour in villages and towns, and as a result of the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, the police were given more authority to deal with such matters in order to resolve them. It was suggested that it should be made more prominent to communities, and that there was a way to anonymously report crimes to the police, however acknowledging that this sometimes made taking a case to court more difficult.
- e.) In response to a question regarding Cyber Crime, it was noted that this crime fell into the category of harassment without violence. It appeared that this type of crime was increasing on a national level, but that there was currently no evidence of an increase in Gwynedd. However, it was a matter that the Police were planning for. Information on online safety was being distributed.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

**7. LLYN BACH CAR PARK, PORTHMADOG - call-in request**

- a.) It was reported that a request had been made by three Committee members to call-in a decision made by the Cabinet Member on Llyn Bach Car Park, Porthmadog. Committee members were reminded of the procedure and of their right to call in decisions made by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members which had not yet been implemented, to be reconsidered. It was expressed that the decision was being called in on the grounds that;
- Adequate consideration had not been given to the fact that the Railway Company could use Westminster statutes to use the land for purposes contrary to the Council's environmental and regeneration policies.
  - There had been insufficient local consultation.
- b.) A report was submitted by the Head of the Regulatory Department setting the context, by explaining that the decision had been to authorise the exchange of land through an agreement with Ffestiniog Railway Company to give grounds to agree upon a practical work programme to facilitate the effective management of the site. It was explained that discussions between the Council and the Railway Company had been going on for years, and that the Head of the Regulatory Department had reviewed the matter and had come to the conclusion that the matter had dragged on for too long. The Head of Department's main conclusion was that focus needed to be placed on the relevant matters and a solution sought before the matter reached the point of having to be referred to a land tribunal, as that would likely result in an unsatisfactory outcome and significant costs for the Council.
- c.) In terms of local consultation, it was reported that such land exchange matters were not the subject of broad consultation, and in the context of re-locating a recycling site that was on the car park, it was acknowledged that not enough notification and forewarning had been undertaken with the Local Member, the Town Council or the public.
- ch.) The Solicitor highlighted that the Cabinet Member had made a practical decision to solve land ownership.
- d.) The Local Member's Observations:
- That decisions outside the matter's context had clouded what had been noted.
  - Concern that the Railway Company intended to develop a depositary on the land and not only a car park. It needed to be ensured that conditions were imposed on the land to withstand applications for developments on the land in the future.
  - That the site was unsuitable as a thoroughfare for transporting heavy goods between the road and the railway, which was contrary to some principles noted in the Unitary Development Plan.
  - The land was near social housing which was a shelter for the elderly and vulnerable adults.
  - That insufficient consultation had been undertaken with Heol Madog residents and also the need to consider the effect of this on the Hen Felin development.
  - Concern that the decision had been made abruptly.
- dd.) In response to the above observations, it was noted that the Railway Company did not intend to make any developments on the site, but if an application was submitted, the planning procedure would have to be followed which as a result would adhere to appropriate policies and give consideration to the amenities of neighbouring residents. It was added that the Regulatory Department were keeping an eye on the site in terms of the operational elements. If an activity did not comply with the agreement, the department would have to investigate. It was noted that this message had been clearly highlighted to the Company.
- e.) Matters arising from the subsequent discussion:

- Establishing a depository would reflect an industrial site rather than what already existed on the land
  - Concerns needed to be re-directed and re-consultation was essential to identify what the risks and benefits were for local residents
  - Engagement and sharing information with the community and the local member before implementation in order to ensure that the community was happy with the decision
  - That every option was considered
  - Lessons needed to be learned by ensuring that improved engagement and consultation existed with local residents - the matter of a lack of engagement arose too often.
  - There was a need to consider legal conditions and considerations for the use of the land in future
  - The railway's powers needed to be considered.
- f.) In response to the observations, it was noted that any further consultation would have to add value, and given that legal opinion had already been noted it was clear that only a land ownership solution had been decided here.

**RESOLVED to acknowledge the concerns of the local members and to request that the Cabinet Member delays implementation for the time being, so that the local member and the officers have an opportunity to engage with the community and consider any other options for the development.**

## **8. WASTE STRATEGY: CHANGE TO RESIDUAL WASTE COLLECTION**

- a.) Councillor John Wynn Jones highlighted that this was his first meeting as the Cabinet Member for the Environment, and the good work that his predecessor, Councillor Gareth Roberts had undertaken was acknowledged.
- b.) A report was submitted by the Head of Highways and Municipal Department reporting on the main findings (up to now) of implementing the residual waste collection procedure in the Dwyfor Area and whether there was any impact on the citizen in Dwyfor as a result of implementing these changes.
- c.) On 20 October 2014, the new procedure of waste collection every three weeks was commenced. It appeared that the change had been introduced fairly easily, and it was clear from the beginning that Dwyfor residents were ready for the change and understood the arrangements. It was reported that an Operational Team and an Engagement Team had been established to introduce the changes. A Recycling Officer was based in Galw Gwynedd, Penrhyndeudraeth to receive enquiries over the period.
- ch.) Following a review of the participation of Dwyfor residents to the change by WRAP, an increase of 6.4% of recycling waste and 6.3% of food waste was reported (a sample of 1131 houses). It also appeared that the initial figures in terms of the impact on recycling performance in the Dwyfor Area also reported on a significant increase in recycling food and residual waste. As a result, it was reported that this change in Dwyfor alone had significantly contributed to the increase in Gwynedd Council's recycling performance from 54% in March 2014 to 57% for the entire County at the end of November 2014. (It must reach 58% by the end of March 2016). As well as this, with a reduction of 22% in residual waste from 15000 houses in Dwyfor, this in itself would save over £100,000 for the Council in landfill costs over a year.

d.) Two short videos that had been broadcast through Youtube during the campaign were shown - one to share information about the changes and the second to thank the people of Dwyfor for their support.

dd.) The following improvements were suggested;

- Introduce the recycling cart before implementing the change to the collections if possible
- Review Christmas and Boxing Day arrangements
- Highlight a message of thanks through the calendar - sharing positive messages was effective (not only online).

e.) As well as this, it was noted that further attention was needed for;

- The process of introducing recycling bins in public places
- Improving training for employees to ensure further care - this was core to the process
- Pressurising companies who created waste - needed to push this on the Welsh Government to encourage fewer packaging materials
- Encouraging residents to recycle in flats
- Highlighting colours better on the calendar and reminding people through text was suggested.

#### **RESOLVED**

- a.) **To express the Committee's congratulations to the Department and the people of Dwyfor on the success that has been seen through introducing the new arrangements**
- b.) **To welcome the fields that the Department intended to improve - introduce a recycling cart sooner, if possible, adapt the Christmas and Boxing Day arrangements and highlight messages of thanks to the people of Dwyfor**
- c.) **To suggest further improvements through training the workforce to improve tidiness; encourage moving on to develop recycling in bins on the street as well as commercial waste; eager to see creative ideas being developed for situations in flats, community / rural points and the summer holidays.**
- ch.) **To ask the Cabinet Member to write to the Welsh Government regarding the Committee's viewpoint on packaging.**
- d.) **To invite the Cabinet Member back to report on implementing changes to residual waste collection in Meirionnydd and to report whether the improvements and savings have been realised**

#### **9.) LEISURE CENTRES - UPDATE ON LEISURE REVIEW BY JUST SOLUTIONS.**

Councillor Mair Rowlands was welcomed to her first Scrutiny Committee as the Cabinet Member for Leisure.

- a.) A report was submitted by the Head of the Economy and Community Department on the progress that had been made following the completion of a report on the profile of users of Leisure Centres as well as the recommendations of the strategic review of Gwynedd Leisure Centres by '*Just Solutions*'. The main purpose of the review was to recommend to the Council how suitable, effective and sustainable leisure centres could be developed for the future by establishing a logical and purposeful basis for them.
- b.) Following the results of the strategic report a series of efficiency savings proposals had been formed for the Leisure Service. By now, efficiency savings proposals worth £1.05 million had been incorporated as part of the Council's Financial Strategy for 2014/2015 - 2017/2018. It was reported that the work involving realising the saving of £1.05m was being promoted and reviewed by the Leisure Services Transformation Project Board and reported on the progress to the appropriate Delivery Panel.

- c.) In response to an observation regarding raising fees it was noted that Gwynedd's fees were amongst the lowest in Wales, and it appeared as though location and transportation to the centre were the main factors that prevented people from using them. In terms of visits, Gwynedd appeared to be 2<sup>nd</sup> through Wales. It was also noted that not one Leisure Centre was self-sufficient through Gwynedd with a range of between 41% and 80% on the scale of costs being re-claimed.
- ch.) It was reported that the Welsh Government were cutting the free swimming grant by 40% and therefore it would be essential to campaign to use this money in a more creative manner. It was reported that a new scheme was being introduced, but an observation was made that it was necessary to promote the resource and to give an opportunity to each child including the right for parents to swim for free if a child under 8 years old was present.
- d.) It was agreed that there was potential here to improve and develop centres. Good opportunities had been identified by the department along with a readiness to collaborate with communities. It was emphasised that there was no intention to transfer any centre to the Private Sector, and that the Treborrh Track and the Arfon Centre in Bangor were being considered as possible transfers back to their owners.
- dd.) The Cabinet Member outlined that there was no intention to close any Leisure Centres but rather to offer improved models. It was noted that every Leisure Centre Manager was reviewing business plans to make the Centres more attractive and considering different types of activities, bearing in mind that every centre cannot offer everything. Within every area mature discussions would be held with the local members, Stakeholders and Community Councils regarding the development of the local centre - discussions in Barmouth had already begun. It was noted that if services were offered to the public, they must be open to the public and flexible opening hours must be set as there had been complexity in some centres regarding what was available and when.

**RESOLVED to accept the report and look forward to collaborating locally with the Leisure Centres' business plans**

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 1.20pm