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## **Communities Scrutiny Committee 13 July 2021**

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**Present:**

**COUNCILLORS:** Stephen Churchman, Glyn Daniels, Elwyn Edwards, Annwen Hughes, Aled Wyn Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Elwyn Jones, Kevin M Jones, Linda Morgan, Edgar Wyn Owen, Elfed Roberts, Angela Russell, Mike Stevens, Gethin Williams and Owain Williams.

**Officers present:**

Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager), Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Advisor) and Eirian Roberts, Sioned Mai Jones and Natalie Jones (Democracy Services Officers).

Present for item 7:

Councillor Catrin Wager (Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal Services), Steffan Jones (Head of Highways and Municipal Services).

Present for item 8:

Councillor Gareth Griffith (Cabinet Member for the Environment), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department).

Present for item 9:

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Council Leader) and Nonn Gwenllian Hughes (Programme Manager - Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board (PSB)).

### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

**Councillor Berwyn P Jones was elected Chair of this committee for 2021/22.**

### **2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

**Councillor Glyn Daniels was elected Vice-chair of this committee for 2021/22.**

### **3. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Simon Glyn and Dafydd Owen.

### **4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

Declarations of personal interest were received from Councillors Elwyn Jones and Annwen Hughes on Item 7 of the Agenda as they were Community Council clerks.

The members weren't of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest and therefore didn't leave the meeting during the discussion on the Item.

### **5. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items to note.

## 6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 22 April 2021, as a true record.

## 7. SALT BINS

A foreword was received from Councillor Catrin Wager, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal, reminding the Committee of the cuts made over the years which had led to community Councils taking responsibility for the salt bins.

It was explained that work had been commissioned to look at the provision as there was a sense that it was unfair on more rural community councils or those on different terrain that needed more provision.

The Head of Highways and Municipal Department added that the report highlighted the existing gritting arrangements and arrangements regarding the main priority and second priority roads.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by members:-

- The members were thanked for the report and the Chair and Vice-chair were congratulated on their appointments.
- It was asked whether it would be possible to work with local farmers and contractors in the area so that they had a supply to use and consequently salt bins would not be needed around the area.
- Enquiries were made as to whether town and community councils had insurance cover in the event of accidents when people went to fetch salt, or was this a responsibility of the Authority.
- It was noted that, in some areas, farmers had worked with the Council for years and enquiries were made as to whether this would continue, particularly in areas with steep roads, compared with more level towns.
- It was suggested that it would be fairer for the cost to be divided equally between town and community councils so that there was less pressure on smaller villages that needed to use it more.
- One member reminded the committee that we had not yet experienced a hard winter since this duty fell on town and community councils and enquiries were made about the cost of all the accidents that could occur should there be no supply.
- A question was raised about the £100,000 savings target as this had not been delivered and enquiries were made as to whether there were better options in order to avoid any difficulties for community and town councils.
- A member asked how many community and town councils had committed and whether the Council continued to fill bins in communities that had not committed.

In response to the observations, the Head of Highways and Municipal Department noted the following:-

- It was agreed, if the Council would be addressing the provision, that an opportunity to collaborate and keep the benefit local was needed here, by awarding contracts to local contractors or farmers.

- In terms of insurance, it was noted that the salt bins were there to use at the individual's own risk and so there was no subsequent liability against the community or town council.
- It was noted that if there was any risk, that the responsibility stood with the Local Authority to ensure that the roads were safe.
- It was agreed that there was a need to rationalise the communication method around making arrangements to re-fill bins with salt.
- It was noted that the department was looking at priority / second priority roads in order to ensure user safety.
- In relation to savings, the Head explained that he was eager to hear the views of the committee on the next steps around the salt bin arrangements.
- Reference was made to the appendix, which noted that 46 councils, which was over half the town and community councils, had committed to the current scheme.

## **RESOLVED**

- a) To accept the report and to note the observations received.**
- b) That a further report will be submitted to the committee to provide an update on the situation.**

## **8. TRANSPORT - SOCIAL VALUE**

The Head of Environment Department submitted the report and he began by reminding the Committee of the main matters around public transport, i.e. the cost, over-reliance on specific companies and people's over-reliance on buses. It was emphasised that the bus network had developed recently and it was reiterated that the residents' needs had changed as a result of a change in practices over the pandemic.

A discussion was held on the main matters under consideration when creating the strategic review in question, which included the following:

- Identifying the need in each community as some were wholly dependent on specific routes in order to meet their basic needs.
- The engagement work that had taken place locally in order to use the responses to identify the need.
- Identifying the social value of investing in public transport services.
- The committee was reminded that Gwynedd's position as a more rural area created more challenges around transport needs.
- A discussion was held on encouraging passengers to travel on buses once more following a period of low use.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by members:-

- Gratitude was expressed for the useful information within the report and it was noted that losing services in some communities had been a blow, as many people needed them in order to visit the dentist or doctor.
- It was proposed that there was a need to look at the bus timetable, e.g. offering an earlier service in order to use this for work or education purposes.
- Clarity was sought on the bus timetable and services as mentioned in page 33 of the Agenda regarding the Bus Service number 14 following the University's report.
- Enquiries were made as to whether there had been discussions on the shuttle buses as they finished early, and that later journeys would be advantageous so that towns and

villages could benefit from visitors.

- It was reiterated that later buses would enable people to park in Caernarfon and travel to Snowdonia, rather than park by the mountains.
- Enquiries were made as to whether the timetable reflected the current needs of locals as the buses were passing by half-empty.
- It was reiterated that there was a need to encourage former passengers to return to using the buses and there was a high social value if people used them to go shopping and for similar journeys.

In response to the members' observations, the Head of Environment Department noted the following:-

- That the department sought to put pressure on Welsh Government to review their timetables, however, they were eager to have a relatively swift journey through Wales.
- It was noted that it should be suggested to Welsh Government that every other T2 service travelled into communities and that the rest travelled more directly through Wales.
- It was explained that a climate change department had been established within the Government and that they were focusing on public transport and on trains and buses in order to reduce the carbon footprint.
- In relation to the parking situation for visiting Snowdonia, it was noted that work was being done jointly with the National Park in order to look at solutions to reduce the use made of personal transport.
- It was agreed that there was a need to tweak the timetable so that earlier and later journeys occurred.
- It was noted that the foundation of the work before the committee today was to investigate whether the current service was fit for purpose and met the needs of users.
- It was reiterated that there was a need to plan for all users, although everyone's needs were different.
- The officer noted they would contact the member regarding Bus Service Number 14 with more information.

## **RESOLVED**

**To accept the report and to note the observations received.**

## **9. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GWYNEDD AND ANGLESEY PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD**

The report was submitted by the Council Leader and he noted that the Public Services Board's activities had been greatly affected by Covid, but had now recommenced. He turned to the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board's Programme Manager who guided the Committee through the report and noted the following;

- That the Board had four sub-groups which carried out their work on various roles, and an update was provided on these.
- In relation to the Climate Change sub-group, it was noted that workshops were being held, along with engagement within the community.
- It was noted that the Homes for local people sub-group had ended as other departments had taken the lead, and that the group's work was now complete.
- Reference was made to the work streams under the Mental Health, Adults and Children sub-group, and that the Board was collaborating with the leaders.

- In relation to the sub-group associated with the Welsh language, it was noted that this group now had a leader and so the work had recommenced.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by members:

- A question was asked about why the sub-group relating to housing for local people had ended.
- It was suggested that there was a need to engage with residents about climate change and how to cope with challenges such as flooding.
- The question about houses for local people was reiterated, and it was noted that there was a concern about the lack of houses in more southern areas of the County, e.g. in Tywyn, which faced a housing crisis and had a growing community.
- A question was asked as to whether there was an intention to plant more trees in Gwynedd as a part of the climate change agenda.
- That the Welsh Government requires a courtesy level of Welsh language skills within their jobs. The member added that a more natural use of the Welsh language is needed across Wales.
- That a quota of second homes is needed in Gwynedd because of the loss of housing stock and the reduction in rental properties available.

In response to the above observations, the following was noted:-

- That there was a need to avoid duplication at all costs and that was why a decision was made to end the work on houses for local people. The Council Leader reiterated that a huge amount of work had been done on housing.
- It was noted that we had a lot to learn from residents and that it was intended to go out and hold a dialogue within communities to see what mattered to them. In terms of climate change, it was noted that this was a future discussion topic with residents.
- That the work of the Welsh Language Sub-group regarding ensuring that the public receive Welsh medium services is relevant to all public service matters.
- That the housing stock has reduced, and over the past four years over 600 houses have been built but around 800 houses have left the housing stock. This has led to an increase in the amount of homelessness and the issue needs more publicity.

## **RESOLVED**

**To approve the work programme and note the observations received.**

### **10. DRAFT SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

The draft scrutiny work programme for 2021/22 was submitted to be adopted by the committee following the workshop that was held on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

It was noted that there was one adjustment to the work programme since the workshop. It was explained that because of reasons beyond control, the Item 'Annual update on the Community Safeguarding Partnership' has been moved from the meeting scheduled for the 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 to the meeting schedule for the 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2022.

## **RESOLVED**

**To accept the draft work programme.**

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 11.50am.

Chair