Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee Report

Date of meeting :	8th February 2022
Cabinet Member:	Cllr. Gareth Thomas
Contact Officer :	Llŷr B Jones, Assistant Head Economy and Community
Department / Service :	Economy and Community
Item Title	Developing a Regeneration Framework for Gwynedd

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023 sets out the Council's vision of '*supporting all the people of Gwynedd to prosper and live a fulfilling life in their Community, in one of the best counties to live in'*.

1.2 During 2019, the Council's Cabinet decided to establish a Regeneration Board to take a transformational approach to community regeneration. The Board is chaired by the Leader of the Council and comprises Cabinet Members for Economy, Environment, Property and Housing, Highways and the Welsh Language and is supported by officers from the relevant Departments.

1.3 'Regeneration' has been defined by the Board as 'a deliberate effort to improve areas economically, environmentally, socially or culturally' in order to create healthy, prosperous, dynamic and sustainable communities with a prominent and central place for the Welsh language'.

1.4 Based on this definition, a number of functions and Services across the Council; together with a wide range of local organisations and groups actively contribute to regeneration. In order to achieve the Regeneration Board's ambition, it was agreed that that a New Regeneration Framework for Gwynedd developed.

1.5 During 2020 work was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although uncertainty remains regarding the pandemic situation, work on the Framework has resumed during 2020/21. Indeed, the short-term impact of the pandemic has been felt by communities across Gwynedd, and the need for a Regeneration Framework may be greater than ever.

2. WHY DOES IT NEED TO BE SCRUTINISED?

2.1 A program has been prepared for the development of the proposed Regeneration Framework. The Committee is asked to scrutinise the direction of the proposed Framework, and the actions it has taken during Phase 1 (Setting the Foundations).

3.   PROPOSED REGENERATION FRAMEWORK

3.1   In seeking to develop the basis for the proposed Regeneration Framework, a wide range of factors and considerations have had to be taken into account.

        a)   Sources of Influence

3.2   As part of the initial preparatory work, the Regeneration Board considered different economic models, as well as community regeneration models that are being developed in other areas. In this regard, the relevance of a number of 'drivers' was highlighted including the Promoting Sustainable Development model (the four pillars, seven well-being goals and the five ways of working); the Doughnut Model (finding "the safe and just space" between the environmental ceiling and the social floor); and the Community Wealth Building model by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). In undertaking the initial work, the importance of the climate crisis was also highlighted.

3.3   More recently, there are also concerns about the impact of COVID-19 on residents and communities. In this respect it is arguable that the need for a current Regeneration Framework is greater than ever.

3.4   In light of the above, it was agreed that the Regeneration Framework would give particular attention to developing and supporting living, sustainable, healthy and viable communities, with the confidence and ambition to maximise new opportunities and contribute to local solutions.

        b)   Geography and spatial aspects

3.4   In considering the purpose and opportunities of developing such a framework, it became clear that it would need to be developed in two main parts namely

               -        **Part A: County Framework**
                        Providing context, direction, arrangements, (and in terms of Gwynedd Council corporate priorities)
               -        **Part B: Local Area Plans**
                        Regeneration plan for local areas reflecting local priorities

3.5   In trying to identify local areas or communities we looked at the geography of the county. As a starting point, current well-being areas were looked at but some areas were considered too large in the context of local community regeneration. Through this work, 13 local regeneration areas were identified which are included in the map below.

Regeneration Framework Areas1

3.6   Developing of a series of local regeneration plans would be a means of highlighting local characteristics and priorities, and providing an opportunity to work with local organisations. A key and central part of developing the local regeneration plans would be engagement and consultation arrangements to identify local aspirations for the development of their areas.

c) Arrangements for the Developing Local Regeneration Plans

3.7   In 2021, Burum Consultancy and its associates were appointed to support elements of the preparatory work - including analyzing the data sources at a local level, and considering community engagement working arrangements.

3.8   As part of this work, consideration was given to the need to develop effective engagement arrangements that would provide the basis for the development of local regeneration plans. Emphasis on public participation is in keeping with Ffordd Gwynedd by putting residents at the heart of all activities.

3.9   Based on this work, it was decided to develop proposals following the Asset Based Community Regeneration methodology. This involves honing and developing of current strengths within the community and to be guided by the principles below:

1. **Everyone has a contribution to make:** Every person in a community has something to contribute.
2. **Relationships build a community**: People need to be involved for sustainable community development to occur.
3. **It must be citizen centered**: Citizens should be considered as actors - not recipients - in development.
4. **Leaders involve others**: Community development is strongest when it includes a broad base of community action.
5. **People are concerned**: The concept of "apathy" needs to be challenged by listening to people's interests.

6. **Listen** : Decisions should come from conversations where people are heard.
7. **Ask** : Asking for ideas is more sustainable than giving answers.
8. **An inside out organization**: Members of the local community are in control.
9. **Organizations serve the community**: Organisational leaders should create opportunities to involve community members, then "step back".

3.10 Unfortunately, it became apparent that Covid-19 restrictions would continue to influence arrangements for community engagement for some time to come.

4. PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPING LOCAL REGENERATION PLANS

4.1 Based on the preparatory work in shaping the proposed Regeneration Framework, a program has been developed for preparing regeneration plans for 13 local areas.

4.2 In developing the program, particular attention was given to the Asset Based Community Regeneration methodology. In essence, the Program consists of seven stages, divided into three main phases
  - Phase 1 - Setting the foundations for co-producing an area regeneration plan (stages 1-3)
  - Stage 2 - Developing the plan (steps 4-5)
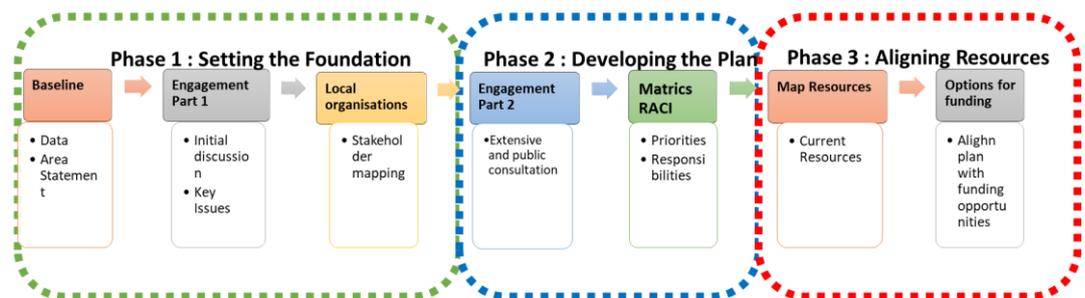 - Phase 3 - Aligning the resources to deliver the plan (steps 6-7)

Figure 1: Main Program Steps

4.3 The main aspects of the Program can be summarized as follows:

Steps		Timetable
	PHASE 1: INSTALLATION OF BASIC	
1.	**Baseline Development** Area Statements prepared, summarizing baseline data in easy-to-understand infographic.	April 2021 - August 2021
2.	**Initial Engagement Activity** Initial dialogue with Members, Town / Community Councils and community groups active in the areas.	September 2021 - November 2021
3.	**Develop a comprehensive list of area stakeholders** Map all area stakeholders in preparation for Phase 2 of the program.	September 2021 - December 2021
	PHASE 2: DEVELOPING THE PLAN	
4.	**Detailed Engagement**	

		Comprehensive and public engagement work including open seminars, focus groups, online consultation and drop-in sessions (if possible).	February 2022 - June 2022 *
	5.	**Develop Matrix of organizations and operational partners** Consider the roles, operational contributions and responsibilities of different organisations and groups when developing local action plans.	February 2022 - June 2022
		PHASE 3: ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES FOR DELIVERY	
	6.	**Resource Mapping** This refers to gathering information from organizations and funders about resources for achieving the objectives of the local regeneration plans. Stakeholder talks and workshops with wider partners will be an important part of this work.	May 2022 onwards
	7.	**Identify options to align plan with funding opportunities** At this stage, emphasis is placed on ensuring that the aims and tasks of the Regeneration Plan are aligned with the funding opportunities.	June 2022 onwards
		Action Plans prepared Action Plans prepared for 13 local regeneration areas, incorporating local priorities and activities of Gwynedd Council, county partners and local organizations	July 2022 onwards

4.4 It is anticipated that the above steps will need to be completed in order to prepare an Action Plan for each of the 13 areas. There may be some variation between areas reflecting local characteristics.

5. CURRENT POSITION UPDATE

5.1 During the 2021/22 period, work has proceeded with the proposed program despite the difficulties and uncertainties relating to Covid-19. We are nearing completion of Phase 1 (Setting the Foundations) of the program, and a summary of the steps is set out below

Step 1: Develop the Baseline

5.2 As part of the Burum Consultants report, work was undertaken to consider what information and data was available to provide information on the economic, social, environmental and cultural situation of local areas.

5.3 A number of standard and current data sources are generally published at county level. In order to collect data on the local areas, there was a challenge in identifying data sources at the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) or similar. Although several data sources have been identified, and data collected, it should be noted that some of the data sources are likely to be somewhat dated - including the 2011 Census.

5.4 With the support of the Council's Communications and Engagement Service, an Area Statement was prepared for each of the 13 areas using available data. In terms of presenting the information, the objectives of the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-23 were used to identify key themes. In addition, comparative data has been incorporated for the Gwynedd and Wales averages if applicable.

5.5 An example of an Area Statement is included as Appendix A for information. Such a Statement was prepared for each area, an will be included within the new digital platrom being developed for the public engagement.

5.6 The Area Statements actually served two purposes. First, was to offer a summary of the characteristics of the area based on available data. Secondly, it would provide a context for initial discussions with local communities in trying to identify key local issues and priorities.

Step 2: Initial Engagement Activity (Phase 1)

5.7 The aim of this step was to hold initial conversations with Members, Town / Community Councils and prominent community groups to ask them about strengths, priorities and opportunities in their communities. In terms of identifying local issues and priorities, it is believed that the views, experiences and feelings of local residents need to be fully considered.

5.8 In order to facilitate and apply a consistent approach to initial discussions, participants were asked to consider the following questions:

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1. *In general, how do you feel about you as a place to live now:*
   a. *What's good about the area? (up to 5 things)*
   b. *What's not so good about the area? (up to 5 things)*

2. *Imagine in the year 2035 you were living in the ideal area. What would have changed for this to happen? (identify 3-5 priority areas). In reaching your conclusion, please feel free to consider the statistics and headings in the 'Area Statement' attached)*

3. *Who are the main organisations and groups that could come together to make the change needed?*

4. *Are you aware of any other relevant or local consultation work that has taken place?*

'Our Area' Initial Engagement Questions (2021)

5.9 Initial engagement work was mainly arranged through the Community Support Service, Economy and Community Department with the support of the Communication and Engagement Service. The methods of receiving feedback and comments from participants have varied - from plenary meetings, meetings with nominated representatives, to written responses. However, all comments and responses are input into the "Our Area 2035" database.

5.10 The table below shows the number of responses received by area as part of the initial discussions.

Local Regeneration Area	No.
Bangor Catchment Area	13
Bro Ogwen	10
Caernarfon Catchment Area	8
Bro Peris	23
Bro Lleu / Nantlle	15
Lake District	18
Pwllheli Catchment Area	14
Porthmadog / Penrhyndeudraeth area	7
Bro Ffestiniog	10
Bro Ardudwy	14
Bala Penllyn Catchment Area	7
Bro Dysynni	10
Dolgellau Catchment Area	9
Total amount	**158**

5.11   It should be noted that the arrangements have varied from area to area. As the intention was for initial engagement, it was originally envisaged that a limited number of responses would be received, but considerable interest had been shown.

5.12   All responses have now been recorded and analyzed, and a report of the results prepared for each of the 13 areas individually.

5.13   Summary examples of these reports are included as Appendix B for information.

5.14   Although these reports are based on initial discussions only, the exercise has highlighted the importance of local attitudes and characteristics.

5.15   However, it is also apparent that there are common issues raised in many areas, and the table below provides some examples

"What's good about the area"	*Many areas have highlighted issues such as* • *Environment and proximity to natural attractions* • *Community spirit and friendship* • *Welsh language and culture* • *Amenities and amenities such as shops, cafes, restaurants* • *Organisations, charities, enterprises and community groups*
"What's not so good about the area?"	*Many areas have highlighted issues such as* • *Lack of high paid / full time jobs* • *Lack of affordable housing for local people* • *Public transport and bus network* • *Number of second and holiday homes in the area*

	• *Concerns about health provision*
"Imagine in the year 2035 you were living in the ideal place. What would have changed for this to happen? "	*Many areas have highlighted issues such as* • *Plans to secure housing suitable for the needs of local people* • *Greener area and environmental protection schemes* • *Creating high value work and jobs* • *Public transport - accessible, integrated and appropriate to local needs* • *More health, care and well-being resources*

5.16 The information and responses received during the initial work will be used for the next stages of the program.

Wider Engagement Opportunities

5.17 In planning for the initial engagement work, it also became apparent that a number of Departments / Services across the Council were preparing for various consultation and engagement campaigns during 2021/2 and 2022/3.

5.18 As a result the Regeneration Framework engagement work has been designed so that different engagement streams can be integrated under the banner of "Our Area 2035" / Have Your Say in Gwynedd.

5.19 Indeed, information gained from the work to date has already been used as part of the review of well-being assessments (Public Services Board), and used as part of the Clean and Tidy Communities Plan. The information is also used as part of the preparation of a Local Housing Needs Survey (Housing and Property Department) and a Population Needs Assessment (Adult Section).

6   NEXT STEPS

6.1 Following the completion of Phase 1 (Setting the Foundations) of the program for the development of local regeneration plans, we will proceed to Stage 2 (Plan Development). This will include extensive and public engagement to seek the views of communities on local priorities.

6.2 Detailed preparatory work is already underway with the support of the Council's Communications and Engagement service. It is intended to develop a new and bespoke digital platform for the engagement work currently being developed. In addition to the regeneration framework, the platform will be used for a number of other engagement campaigns run by the Council.

6.3 The digital platform currently under development has been designed taking into account the local regeneration areas, and incorporates aspects such as
   -    Individual Area Assessments
   -    Area Reports based on initial discussions
   -    Individual area-specific questionnaire (following Phase 1 methodology)

6.4   Exercise and the digital platform are due to launch by mid-February. It is anticipated that we will delay the promotion of engagement later in March to coincide with the pre-election period.

6.5   During the pandemic, virtual meetings and digital communications have been increasingly used. However, it should also be acknowledged that digital aspects can be a barrier to some sections of the population. As part of the engagement arrangements we also plan for methods and mechanisms for encouraging and facilitating the participation of anyone who wishes to contribute to the work. As part of the questionnaires, we will gather information on participants to enable us to prepare a full equality assessment.

7.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1   The intention of preparing regeneration plans for Gwynedd areas is included within the priorities of the Council Plan 2018-23. There is a commitment to engage with stakeholders to understand how communities want their areas to develop in the next 10-15 years, and to identify local priorities. There is also an opportunity to ensure that activities across Council departments contribute to the development and implementation of Local Regeneration Plans.

7.2   Despite the circumstances of the pandemic, there was a decision to proceed with the development of a new Regeneration Framework for the county.

7.3   The views of the Scrutiny Committee are sought on the direction of the development of the proposed Framework, and the actions that have been implemented during Phase 1 (Setting the Foundations).

APPENDICES:
Appendix A   An example of an Area Assessment
Appendix B   Local Regeneration Area Reports (Stage 1 Draft Summary)