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**THE COUNCIL 3/3/22**

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**Present:** Councillor Simon Glyn (Chair)

Councillors:- Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Beca Brown, Dylan Bullard, Stephen Churchman, Steve Collings, Annwen Daniels, R. Glyn Daniels, Anwen Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Aled Evans, Dylan Fernley, Peter Antony Garlick, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, R. Medwyn Hughes, Judith Humphreys, Nia Jeffreys, Peredur Jenkins, Aeron M. Jones, Aled Wyn Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones, Gareth Tudor Morris Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Keith Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Linda A. Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Dafydd Owen, Dewi Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Jason Parry, Nigel Pickavance, Rheinallt Puw, Peter Read, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Elfed P. Roberts, Gareth A. Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson, Angela Russell, Dyfrig Siencyn, Mike Stevens, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas, Hefin Underwood, Catrin Wager, Cemlyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Owain Williams.

**Officers:** Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Dewi Morgan (Statutory Finance Officer), Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support / Head of Democracy Service), Carys Fôn Williams (Head of Housing and Property Department), Sion Huws (Senior Solicitor - Corporate), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

**Also in attendance:** Eurig Huw Williams (Human Resources Advisory Services Manager) (for item 7), Dewi Jones (Council Business Support Service Manager) (for item 8), Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager) (for item 9), Rhion Glyn (Assistant Head - Adults, Health and Well-being) and Hawis Jones (Adults, Health and Well-being Projects Team Manager) (for item 11), Gareth Jones (Assistant Head - Environment) and Rebeca Jones (Planning Manager - Joint Planning Policy) (for item 12).

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors:- Elwyn Jones, Dilwyn Lloyd, Eirwyn Williams and Gareth Williams.

### **2. MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the Council meeting held on 2 December 2021 as a true record.

### **3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

The Monitoring Officer declared a personal interest in item 7, 'Annual Review - Council's Pay Policy 2022/23' on behalf of the chief officers who were present as the report involved their salaries.

He was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest and, along with the Corporate Director, the Statutory Head of Finance and the Head of Housing and Property Department, the Monitoring Officer withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item, as they did not need to be in attendance to advise. The Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Support remained in the meeting to advise.

In reference to item 12 - Review Report - Joint Local Development Plan, the Monitoring Officer noted that a few members of the Councils were among the responders to the consultation;

however, due to the nature of the report and assuming that there would be no specific discussion on the details of the plan, he did not believe that anyone needed to declare an interest.

#### 4. THE CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Condolences were extended to the family of the former chair of this Council, Evie Morgan Jones, and Councillor Annwen Hughes paid tribute to him.

Condolences were also extended to the following:-

- Councillor Menna Baines and her family on the passing of Menna's father.
- Councillor Eirwyn Williams and his family on the passing of Eirwyn's mother at a hundred years old.
- The Member of Parliament for Dwyfor Meirionnydd, Liz Saville Roberts and her family, at the passing of Liz's mother.
- The family of Aled Roberts, the Welsh Language Commissioner, who had died recently.

It was also noted that the Council wished to sympathise with everyone in the county's communities who had recently lost loved ones.

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect and remembrance.

The Leader gave a statement on behalf of the Council on the situation in Ukraine. He noted:-

- That he wished to express the Council's support to the people of Ukraine and their fundamental right to decide their own fate, without being oppressed through violence by a dictatorial state.
- That Gwynedd Council would be ready to play its part in welcoming any refugees and offering them unconditional sanctuary.
- That he was angry that the Westminster Government was not accepting refugees unconditionally in the same way as other European nations, and that their attitude was merciless and cruel.
- That he had attended a meeting the previous day between the leaders of Welsh councils and Welsh Government and voluntary organisation representatives, and that the work of coordinating and making preparations was underway.
- That the people of Gwynedd were eager to help in every way possible, and that the Council would do its best to provide guidance and support wherever it could.
- That the links recommended by the Government in terms of assisting and making contributions would be shared with the members in due course.

The Leader noted further that he had received a question about any commercial links to Russian companies, and specifically regarding the investments of the Gwynedd Pension Fund. He explained that the Gwynedd Pension Fund invested via the Wales Pension Partnership and that a statement prepared by that partnership noted:-

*"The total of our links to Russian Investments are very small and are less than 1%. Nevertheless, in light of the awful events we are seeing and the economic sanctions set internationally, we have made a mutual decision that we should divest from these holdings as soon as practicably possible.*

*Under the circumstances, we do not believe that being involved with these companies is a possible option."*

The Leader noted further that the huge tragedy in this case was that a close and friendly relationship existed between the people of Ukraine and the people of Russia, and that it was also important to realise that the people of Russia were also suffering, and that this was not

their war. He added that the bravery of those who were prepared to express their objection to this war in the face of harsh prosecution was to be admired, and it was very much hoped that the discussions would continue, and that peace would prevail eventually.

The Chair noted, at the brink of the 2022 local elections, that the 22 leaders of Welsh councils had approved a statement regarding the election campaigning, which called on political groups and candidates to commit to campaign both fairly and respectfully. It was explained that the "Fair Campaign Pledge" report was to be seen on the Members' intranet, and that every member would receive a link to this report.

The Chair noted, since this was the final meeting of the Full Council before the elections, that he wanted to wish all the best to those members who would be standing for election, as well as to those members who had decided to stand down, and he thanked everyone for their cooperation over the past five years. Also, as a member who would be standing down, he expressed his sadness at the fact that this final meeting of the Council was being held virtually, and that members were unable to bid farewell to friends with whom they had collaborated over the years, and he expressed his hope that the Chamber would be full once again following the May elections.

## 5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

## 6. QUESTIONS

*(The Cabinet Members' written responses to the questions had been distributed to the members in advance).*

### (1) A question from Councillor Aeron Maldwyn Jones

"When does this Council anticipate that staff will be back at their desks?"

#### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support, Councillor Nia Jeffreys**

"Thank you to all Council staff for their work during the crisis. The question asks when will staff be back at their desks. Of course, all Council staff have continued to work for the benefit of the people of Gwynedd, despite the fact that the desk may sometimes be located in an attic or at the kitchen table. The way the staff have adapted at short-notice has been incredible, and I am very grateful to them. A lot of work has gone into this, and I have had the opportunity to report to the Cabinet, and a report has gone to the Audit and Governance Committee, but I am glad to have the opportunity today to repeat this to the Full Council.

Considerable talk and attention has been given to "the working world of the future" at an all Wales level over the past year, with Welsh Government declaring an aim of enabling 30% of the country's workforce to be able to work close to, or from their homes.

Gwynedd Council is no different from any other organisation in its planning in this regard. An "Offices Group" has been established since early 2021, which coordinates the preparation work in the local area, with the Chief Executive, the Director, the Head of Corporate Support and human resources officers, health and safety officers, information technology officers and property officers all serving on that Group.

The vision for future working within the Council has been approved by the Cabinet in February and the Audit and Governance Committee had scrutinised the content prior to that. That vision is the output of the efforts of the Offices Group, but it is also based

on a consultation with various cohorts of Council staff, as well as local trade union representatives.

The aim of the vision is that the Council provides the best possible service for the people of Gwynedd, whilst also showing the Council to be a good place to work, and thus attract and retain quality staff.

With the most recent statements from Welsh Government, and the likelihood of the further easing of restrictions in the near future, the time to implement the vision is getting ever closer and the Chief Executive has shared an outline of an action plan with staff, which is a plan that is looking to be implemented gradually, in three phases, over the coming weeks and months, namely:-

- To allow all those employees who must, or wish to work from their work centres all the time, to do so from 7 March,
- To confirm the arrangements for those employees who will mainly work from home, with a view to complete this step before the Easter holidays.
- To reach a final agreement with every individual who has noted a wish to work partly from home and partly from the office, on the work arrangements for both locations. This phase is likely to be introduced over a period of time, formally commencing after Easter this year."

**(2) A question from Councillor Kevin Morris Jones**

"Re: Dolbadarn Hotel, Llanberis

I would like to know what the Council's intentions are for dealing with the problems that exist with the change of use of this building. The former popular hotel is now in the ownership of a businessman from Birmingham (he also has a similar site in Pwllheli). The hotel is being used for homeless people. Although the residents of Llanberis are happy to help each other and the people from the surrounding area, it is obvious that this site - Dolbadarn - is being used to house people who have a vast number of problems in their lives and this creates more problems in the village of Llanberis. Unfortunately, incidents of anti-social behaviour occur within and outside the hotel, which has meant that police and ambulance service presence have been required there often.

I and the residents of the area understand that we need such sites in society, but this site is too big in the centre of a small village like Llanberis. The site is creating more problems and has a negative impact on a village that relies on tourism almost throughout the year.

I have contacted Council officers on this matter in the past but I have not received a clear response or a response that is acceptable to the people of Llanberis."

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Craig ab Iago**

"We are all aware of the housing crisis we are currently facing, and homelessness is a very major aspect of this problem. There are fewer houses available to us to act quickly to house everyone. Pre-Covid, we as a Department had introduced a Homelessness Plan, which is a part of our Housing Action Plan, and in that respect, we were going to be dealing with the situation as it was at the time, and make sure that the plan had followed the procedure, or principle, of housing our people in our communities. What was happening with homelessness at the time was ad hoc, and in my opinion, was unsuitable, and without sufficient support, but this is what the Homelessness Plan itself did - it brought an order to everything, and made sure that there was plenty of safety and support, and it ensured that we support those people.

Unfortunately, Covid kicked in, and this has made the situation even worse, much worse than it was. Currently, we are talking about over 700 people who have been registered homeless in the county, and many more who have not registered because they are too proud to do so. Of those people, 270 people were in bed and breakfast and hotels, such as the one in Llanberis, which is far from ideal, for us or the residents or the homeless people themselves, but as a Council, I am of the opinion that we have a broader duty to look after them, both legally and morally. But, what matters to us is that we make sure, wherever we house people, that the situation is safe, and that the lives of the residents of the area does not deteriorate because of the presence of those people.

Consequently, I was shocked from seeing this question. We challenge performance in this field every month, so I would have expected to hear about this before now. Therefore, I asked the Department to look into this, and make sure that we have not missed anything. I wish to state this clearly, in case any residents are watching, and I wish to make sure that the members understand the situation in this hotel. In March, we began using the hotel to house homeless people. We are not talking here about the sex offenders that people are referring to, or about paedophiles that people are referring to, or about prison leavers. We are not talking about those people at all. We are talking about people we know- people who have possibly lost their jobs or their houses, and who need help, or who have separated from their partner.

In June last year, we heard from the members that issues were arising, and that the community was not happy with what was happening there. Therefore, the Department took immediate action to ensure that 2 security guards were present at the hotel between 5pm and 6am every day, and this has been happening since June in order to ensure that no issues arise. People can inform the Department if any problems arise, and we have not experienced any problems since then. The Police have been there once and the Ambulance Service have been there twice. In the two cases when an ambulance had to be called, residents had been injured or had to be taken to hospital. This had nothing at all to do with their behaviour. Also, the Police had to go there on one occasion as there were protesters outside the building and were causing trouble and talking about sex offenders, but of course, there were no sex offenders in the location. Intensive support is provided to the people who are there. We are talking about a 35-bedroom hotel, and at present, we are using 15 of those rooms. Seven of the residents are women, there are no sex offenders or prison leavers, and no paedophiles.

There is another element here - do we communicate well enough with the community, with the member? Something that is raised very often these days, in the Covid-era, is that Council officers do not respond quickly enough to the members. It is imperative that they do so because we act as the bridge between the community and the Council, and we need to know that the arrangements are good enough to ease any issues that could arise. I have asked the Department to look into the communication with the member, and it seems to me that we have responded immediately. We respond to the problems in writing, and if any problems do arise, we respond. Most of the responses I have seen on black and white from the member are ones thanking the officers very much for their quick response, and so I am happy with what the Council is doing to help our people and to manage the situations. I am happy with what the Department is doing in terms of communication with members, is good enough.

Of course, what matters is - we are talking about a problem that really frightens me, and it completely immoral that this is happening in Wales in the twenty-first century. It is not the Council that is causing homelessness. All we do is try to manage the situation, and it is a situation that gets worse by the day. If we want to point a finger at anyone, we should point a finger at the people in Westminster who punish us for not being rich. They say that there is no magic money tree to help our people, but of course, the magic money tree does exist when it comes to giving grants to their mates

who went to the same schools as they did. They recently wrote off £9bn as 'fraud' on their mates' part, and it is important to remember where the problem derives from, and it does not derive from the Council. I want you all to feel like I am feeling. We have stood to be members because we wish to look after and protect our people - not because of the money. We do the work because of our wish to help our people, and I want to make sure that you feel like the Housing Department and Homelessness Unit feel, because we are here to look after our people. If the member has any further problems, and feels unhappy about the way the Department is dealing with anything, I ask him to contact me directly."

### **Supplementary Question from Councillor Kevin Morris Jones**

"Has Gwynedd Council been placing former-prisoners in this hotel temporarily?"

### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Craig ab Iago**

"No, and neither has it placed any paedophiles or sex offender there, and we do not place people who can be dangerous in the middle of communities. We are talking here about our people, the people of Gwynedd, people who just happen to have hit a difficult time in their lives, and need support. That is why we are here, to help the people of Gwynedd to live in their communities."

### **(3) A question from Councillor Annwen Hughes**

"Could the Leader give us an update on the Llanbedr Bypass scheme?"

### **Response from the Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn**

"As you all know, this is a matter that is very close to the heart of the member, but it is also very close to my heart. You will recall that the substantial road scheme in the Llanbedr area was overturned by Welsh Government in November last year, as a result of an independent roads review, which suggested that there were many environmental and economic weaknesses in the plan.

There were two elements to the road scheme:-

- A bypass for the village of Llanbedr, which is very narrow, with a very narrow bridge in the village, and which suffers very substantial congestion on a regular basis.
- Improving the access to the Snowdonia Aerospace Centre site, which is essential to realise the full potential of the site, and to create quality jobs in the innovative space and aeroplane field.

Gwynedd Council has strongly opposed the decision made by the roads review panel, and has detailed a long-list of shortcomings in their final report. Letters have been sent to ministers, including the First Minister, and meetings were held with Welsh Government officers in the field of transportation and the economy, and I also attended two public meetings in the village of Llanbedr. Unfortunately, we are now in a position where, although Welsh Government cannot explain the shortcomings in the work of the review panel, they are also not prepared to revisit the work. Welsh Government's decision not to support the bypass scheme is likely to stand, and this is saddening and a true injustice for the people of Llanbedr.

We must bear in mind that the scheme continues to have planning permission, but that Welsh Government's decision not to provide financial support has led to the loss of all surplus funding that was required to implement the scheme, including £7.5m in European funding, and these monies are completely lost to the whole of Wales - they have just gone. This is because of the withdrawal from previous vows made regarding

transportation funding and economic funding (due to the Enterprise Zone status of the Aerospace Centre).

In moving forward, we will collaborate with Welsh Government to look at how the access to the Airport can be improved, and they are very eager to do so. The Site is essential in the Space Strategy that has just been published by Welsh Government. Therefore, it is obvious that they continue to support the development of the Site, and improving the access is at the core of the successful implementation of a number of the recommendations in the report. As a part of the work of re-considering improving the access road, we intend to ensure that all types of transport are considered, so that it is possible to improve walking and cycling links for the future."

#### **Supplementary Question by Councillor Annwen Hughes**

"Following the news that there is a new plan to launch the space sector, will other plans be put into practice to improve the access to Llanbedr airport?"

#### **Response by the Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn**

"It is encouraging that the Minister for the Economy, Vaughan Gething, has published his Space Strategy, which places major emphasis on the possibilities in Llanbedr, and those possibilities are very important to us, not just in Llanbedr itself, but in Meirionnydd and beyond. There are opportunities for high quality jobs here. It is strange, because one minister has refused the plan. The Independent Panel, by the way, has alleged that this site and this type of development is unsuitable for rural areas, and I have drawn attention on numerous occasions to the threat to economic developments in rural area, where we genuinely need these jobs. This does give me some solace, and gives me a glimmer of hope to be honest. The Government's left hand is refusing; and the right hand wants to do something, and I, very soon, will be arranging a meeting with the Minister for the Economy and his team, most probably, to discuss how he intends to proceed with his plans without any sort of road scheme. Meanwhile, our officers are collaborating with officers from Transport for Wales and Welsh Government to proceed with the necessary studies to see whether any type of different solution to the road is available here. You and I all know this area very well, and we know that there is no other option apart from this scheme. But there we are - unfortunately we must press on and collaborate and see where we will reach. But I will be holding further discussions with the ministers in the meantime. It is also disappointing that they have not been able to answer our questions, which were specific questions, but we have met with officers, and unfortunately, we have only heard civil service speak - answers that are not really answers."

#### **(4) A question from Councillor Sion Jones**

"Welsh Government gave Gwynedd Council £550,000 last year to develop a cycle route from Bethel to Caernarfon. Section 1 of this route from Bethel to Tyddyn Hen was completed recently, with thanks to the Transport Department for ensuring work of a high standard. Welsh Government has awarded a further sum of £200,000 to plan and develop 'Section 2' of the route, from Tyddyn Hen, Bethel to Caernarfon. Can the Cabinet Member assure me that the Transport Department will prioritise the completion of this scheme within the next year?"

#### **Response from the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Gareth Griffith**

"The Department has prepared a comprehensive answer to the question. It has slipped somewhat as the member is aware, and I also know that the member has been in contact with the Department. There are processes to follow with land purchases, etc., which take time. This has slipped somewhat, but the answer today also refers to other

schemes that the Department has for similar paths across the county. Although it has slipped somewhat, we hope that it will be completed within the period that the member refers to."

### **Supplementary Question from Councillor Sion Jones**

"Is there a specific officer who deals with active travel in Gwynedd?"

### **Response from the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Gareth Griffith**

"This falls within different departments, not just within Environment. It is a good point, and something that arises often. There may be a demand for something of this sort, and I will raise this with the Department."

### **(5) A question from Councillor Judith Humphreys**

"As a part of this Council's work and efforts to ensure equality between women and men and the commitment to work towards tackling violence against women, would the Council consider taking steps towards gaining the White Ribbon accreditation? This would be a clear statement of the Council's commitment."

### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support, Councillor Nia Jeffreys**

"Thank you to the member for her work in promoting the "White Ribbon" scheme and for everything she does to promote women's rights at every opportunity. The "White Ribbon" is a charitable organisation that attempts to bring an end to the violence of men against women. Its aim is for every man to achieve the White Ribbon pledge, which is to never be violent against women and to not excuse or keep silent about violence against women.

The charity attempts to be a catalyst, by encouraging people, specifically boys and men, to change their behaviour where needed, with an emphasis on taking proactive steps and promoting equality and respect.

Every organisation in Britain can be accredited by the "White Ribbon". According to the charity, securing the accreditation helps an organisation to:-

- Make a difference in your communities in order to bring an end to violence against women;
- Increase staff knowledge and skills to address violence against women;
- Be an employer of choice

It is important to note that a lot of good work is already achieved within the Council in this context, with the terms of employment for staff including a domestic violence policy (which notes the support that is available in such situations), whilst officers in the Community Safety Partnership within the Adults, Health and Well-being Department are doing a lot to raise awareness and bring attention to the issue.

Officers from the Human Resources Service have already been in contact with the charity to express an interest in submitting an application for accreditation, as a part of the work identified as a corporate priority in the Council Plan, which is "Ensuring Fairness for All".

The intention is to submit a formal application for accreditation during the next weeks and if approved, to work with the charity to establish a work plan based on four specific criteria, namely;



- Strategic Direction
- Working with men and boys
- Change of culture
- Raising Awareness

Securing accreditation initially and then establishing a specific work plan, in collaboration with the charity, will show clearly and strongly our commitment as a Council to make a difference in our efforts to bring an end to violence against women."

#### **(6) A question from Councillor Angela Russell**

"Recently, the Report of the Royal College of Surgeons was published into the VASCULAR services of Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board.

The vascular service was lost from Ysbyty Gwynedd in 2019 and the entire service was moved to Ysbyty Glan Clwyd. A service that was globally renowned for its success was lost from Ysbyty Gwynedd, and also lost was a well-known, successful and popular surgeon, Professor Dean Williams.

The Royal College's Report provides a frightening account of the quality of the new service at Glan Clwyd - it reports a high number of deaths (the highest in Britain in many fields), and stories of unnecessary amputations. When reading the Royal College's report, it sounds like a third world service, not a service in one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

Between 2019, when the service was centralised in Glan Clwyd, and 2021, I wrote a series of letters, as the Leader of the Independent Group in Gwynedd, to the Chair and Chief Executive of the Health Board, to express concern. I also contacted the Coroner and Public Health Wales on more than one occasion, and I wrote numerous letters to the Daily Post to draw attention to the matter.

It has taken over THREE YEARS for the Health Board to acknowledge that there are huge shortcomings in the service and that patients have suffered unnecessarily. The service is now so horrendous, Liverpool Hospital will now supervise the work of the surgeons.

Almost £3m was invested in a new vascular theatre at Glan Clwyd and it was announced that we in North Wales had a "state of the art theatre".

The truth about it is that shiny, new toys do not always mean that the service will be better. PEOPLE make a good service, people like Professor Dean Williams, who had the experience, the skills and expertise with patients. A huge loss is felt after his departure.

Does the Council agree that we should all work together ACROSS THE POLITICAL PARTIES in this County Council to support and secure local services in Ysbyty Gwynedd?"

#### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Councillor Dafydd Meurig:**

"Of course, I agree 100% with the member. The decision made by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board back in 2017, I believe, is unpardonable. The report we have received about the service at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd is damning to say the least, and I am certainly very prepared to continue working across political boundaries with the member, and others, to get this sorted. Many people have been working diligently over

the years to attempt to draw attention to this, and I most definitely agree with the member, and I am prepared to collaborate."

**(7) A Question from Councillor John Brynmor Hughes**

"Does the Leader of Plaid Cymru agree with a councillor who represents a rural area that all farmers do is reap the rewards of public money throughout their lives?"

**Response by the Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn**

"One correction to the question before I begin, to avoid any misconception - I am not the Leader of Plaid Cymru - I am the Leader of Gwynedd Council, and I am proud of that. This question lies very close to my heart and the answer is simple. I could have answered it in one word - No. I do not agree with the statement and it is unfounded. I seriously believe that the suggestion made is offensive to a sector that is currently under threat across the whole of Wales. I know this from personal experience, having worked in the agricultural field throughout my life. Farmers make a key contribution to the protection and maintenance of our environment, economy, culture and language of our communities. This contribution is invaluable; and justifies the value of public investment. But the changes facing the sector and the rural economy are significant and we must be alert to the risks that can transform the fabric of our rural communities. The UK Government does not provide all the money due to fund the direct payments to farmers or the rural development plans following Brexit. There is a shortfall of £137 million in the current financial year from what the UK Government sends to the Welsh Government to support agriculture and rural development. This creates concern as it does not appear that the Welsh Government's new Rural Development Plan for the future will fund the type of activity to support the local economy seen under the Rural Development Plan for Wales within the EU and will focus from now on, on supporting environmental schemes. There is also concern that the new scheme being developed by the Welsh Government – The Sustainable Farming Scheme – which replaces the Basic Payment Scheme from 2024/25 onwards, will focus too much on supporting farmers to be involved in environmental schemes and plant trees rather than produce food. We may see a situation under this policy where it will not be viable for farmers to continue to farm and our farms will be bought, as already witnessed, by organisations from outside Wales as an investment and the impact on our rural communities could be very far-reaching. It is key that our future policies enable us to respond to the threat positively."

**(8) A question from Councillor Elwyn Jones**

*(The question was asked by the Chair in the absence of Councillor Elwyn Jones)*

"Over the years, many have campaigned, particularly in the south of the County, to do away with the transport charge for Pupils/Students over 16 years old to attend School or College. £260k has been allocated in the 2022-23 budget for this. At the beginning of 2021 adverts were posted by Gwynedd for bids for the Arfon schools school bus contracts DEMANDING the requirement for eligible PSVA (Public Service Vehicle Access Regulation) buses.

One of the reasons for this was that in Arfon Year 12 and 13 pupils pay for School transport - i.e. paying passengers on a bus service.

Due to the lack of such buses the Department of Transport in London delayed the act two or three times - and this is how matters currently stand.

However, the Transport Department in Gwynedd demanded this (and I know that a local company have had significant expenditure to change 5 buses). Due to the

significant expenditure of course there was an increase in contract costs = higher costs for Gwynedd. Therefore for 5 years, Gwynedd sought to justify this by saying that this was a requirement for the disabled.

I agree a 100% of course that we have to have equality, but how many of these pupils wanted to travel on a school bus, while a taxi or family arrangement existed.

May I therefore ask what was the increase in the cost of the Arfon school buses contracts as a result of demanding that the buses conform to PSVAR regulations compared to the former contracts?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Gareth Griffith**

"The member has contacted the Department about this prior to today, and has received a response. I have spoken to one of his electors who has been affected by this. The situation as it stands is that the Westminster Government introduced a set of rules, which includes the type of buses we must have in Britain, and subsequently, this Authority has had to ask companies to tender, and for those companies to have the appropriate buses. I know that this has been expensive to local companies, but we have no choice in the matter. The Westminster Government has postponed the decision to start implementing the rules on many occasions, although I know understand that this will now commence in June. I understand the member's concerns, and I have spoken to at least two local companies about the difficulties they have experienced, but the root of this matter has lied in the Westminster Government from the beginning."

**(9) A question from Councillor Gwynfor Owen**

"Speeding is a concern to many communities, and my Ward, Harlech and Talsarnau, suffers gravely from this problem. The Council has conducted a survey of the situation in Harlech and in Talsarnau. They acknowledge that a problem exists and that something needs to be done about the problem, yet nothing has been done. Therefore, I ask what the Council intends to do about this problem in communities where the Council's surveys themselves prove that a problem does exist?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Gareth Griffith**

"The Department has sent a written response, and as this notes, the Department is seeking to work with partners to deal with such problems, and is in the progress of rolling out, over the coming year, rules that Welsh Government will enforce on us with the county's roads, where the speed limit will be 20mph. Considerable work is being done on this, and this is how things currently stand."

**A supplementary question by Councillor Gwynfor Owen**

"After a lot of whining, I got an officer to agree to visit the sites in September, and gauges were installed and the results were released in October. Again, at a meeting with the officer last month, I was told that the Council was considering consulting with the community around June. I am certain that the Cabinet Member would agree with me that a delay like this is unacceptable, but what can the Department do to speed up the process?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Gareth Griffith**

"In terms of speeding up the process, that is very difficult. I apologise that you have had to wait so much time. I am sure that the other councillors will recall that Dafydd Wyn Williams, Head of Department, wrote to us all recently to explain the problems experienced by the Department, and that he seeking to resolve various things - staffing problems, problems with staff changes, long-term sickness - it has all affected the Department, and other departments of the Authority. The pandemic is still with us, and the departments are still trying to deal with that, but Dafydd Wyn Williams wrote to everyone to apologise and to ask people to be patient, and as I say, I am sure that we all, as Councillors, have the same type of question about speeding in our wards. The honest answer is that the Department is trying to deal with everyone, and is struggling to deal with everything. I apologise for that, but the Department will continue to try and work with everyone, and with the councillors."

## **7. ANNUAL REVIEW - COUNCIL'S PAY POLICY 2022-23**

The Chair of the Chief Officer Appointment Committee presented a report recommending that the Council approves the recommendation of the Chief Officer Appointment Committee to adopt the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions.

A member noted that Gwynedd Council did not make carers a special case, since we were losing staff from the Care Department. In response, it was explained:-

- That Welsh Government had set out an aspiration to see care workers receiving pay that was equivalent to the living wage. That this would happen here in Gwynedd, and it would be above the living wage level if the expected increase expected in national salaries in April would be realised.
- That the vast majority of the Council's carers followed the long-awaited agreement obtained at the beginning of this year, as well as the national pay increase. The vast majority of carers were on a salary of £9.99 per hour, backdated to 1 April 2021. That national discussions would commence again during April / May on the 2022/23 pay rise, and there was a strong likelihood that next year's pay increase would be a percentage higher than what had been determined for the year gone by. This meant that the carers would certainly be on a salary of between £10 and £10.50 per hour, backdated to 1 April, 2022.

**RESOLVED to approve the recommendation of the Chief Officers Appointment Committee to adopt the Pay Policy for 2022/23.**

## **8. GWYNEDD COUNCIL PLAN 2018-23: 2022/23 REVIEW**

The Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, presented the report, inviting the Council to adopt the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-23: 2022/23 Review for it to be implemented during 2022/23.

The Leader thanked the Business Support Service Manager and his team for their heroic work in preparing the plan.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions. The following matters were raised by individual members:

- The Government's intention to provide free school meals to all primary aged pupils was welcomed, however, a question was asked as to whether this would incur additional costs that would need to be shouldered by the Council. In response, it was noted that the scheme was not as simple as it appeared, but to date, there had been financial commitment from Welsh Government to meet the additional cost. Discussions were taking place between each council and the Government in order to establish the exact amount of those costs.

It was explained that the cost of providing, or paying for the dinner was one element, and that the cost of providing buildings, space within those buildings and support services, etc., was an additional element that was not, possibly, fully costed at this point in time. More information would be shared with the members as the details developed, but the officers were quite confident about the current situation. The Leader noted that he would place pressure on the Government to fully fund the scheme. In response to a further question about the impact of the plan on school budgets, it was noted that everyone realised that the plan was having a substantial impact on some schools, particularly large schools, but it was confirmed that this was included in the discussions with the Government.

- Concern was expressed about the direction under Improvement Priority 6 to give priority to the Dolgellau and wider Meirionnydd area when identifying opportunities for care provisions, and it was emphasised that the highest priority should be given to provide a nursing care home on the Penrhos site, since no nursing beds were left in Pen Llŷn anymore. In response, it was emphasised that there was no competition between Meirionnydd and Pen Llŷn. There was an excellent opportunity in Penrhos to create a very special resource that would combine all care and nursing services on one site, and it was confirmed that the Council would continue to place pressure and collaborate with the Health Service and the housing association to realise this ambition.
- With reference to the bid (under item 9 on the agenda), to abolish the £300 fee for a post-16 travel pass, it was noted that parents in Dwyfor and Meirionnydd (particularly in the rural areas), who had been paying this fee over the past 10 years had suffered real inconsistency and unfairness, and it was suggested that the Council had considered the additional money as bait for parents in Arfon to send their children to the colleges. In response, it was noted that should the Council approve the bid, abolishing the fee would assist families at a time when living costs were rising substantially, and improved young people's access to courses and better career paths. It was also explained that the decision was made to charge a fee for a post-16 travel pass many years ago by a different Council to this one, under a different financial situation. Fortunately, this year, a settlement had been received that enabled the Council to consider different options to what had been possible during the period of cuts, and one of those options was to abolish the fee for a post-16 travel pass.

**RESOLVED to adopt the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023: 2022/23 Review for it to be implemented during 2022/23.**

## 9. 2022-23 BUDGET

The Chair noted, in line with the Constitution, that the Head of Finance had to receive notice of any amendment to the budget in writing in advance, and that this amendment had to lead to a balanced budget, if it was to be discussed. All Council members had been reminded of this the previous week, and as the Head of Finance had not received any notice of an amendment by the designated deadline, it would not be possible for the Council to consider any amendment to the budget.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Ioan Thomas submitted the following:-

- A report recommending a budget for the Council's approval for 2022/23;
- The draft decision on the Council Tax based on the Cabinet's recommendation to the Council (based on an increase of 2.95%), along with tables showing the Council Tax level and the increase per community.

The Head of Finance reminded the members of some of the main risks in Appendix 10 of the report, and he confirmed, having considered all risks and mitigation steps, that he was of the opinion that the Council Budget for 2022/23 was sound, sufficient and deliverable.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions.

The following matters were raised by individual members:

- A question was asked about how much less the Council Tax increase would have been if the Council had not approved 1 March as an additional day's leave for staff. In response, it was explained that the expenditure on allowing a holiday on St David's Day was expenditure from the current financial year, and as explained to the Cabinet and the Audit and Governance Committee, it had been funded from an underspend in specific corporate budgets. It was explained that the maximum of £200,000 earmarked for that was a one-off bid, and that no decision had been made to fund the bank holiday on 1 March every year. As a result, it would not have had any impact on the budget submitted before the Council.
- It was noted that the Council had transferred the cost of the additional day of leave for staff to the next financial year in order to reduce the tax increase, and it was asked how much £200,000 would be as a percentage of the tax. In response, it was explained, in brief, that a 1% increase (or reduction) in Council Tax equated to around £800,000, so £200,000 would be around 0.25%.
- It was noted that the people of Gwynedd were angry that the Council had approved an additional day's leave for staff, and that the timing of this had been disgraceful.
- It was noted, although the fact that money was available to spend on various bids this year, it was the greatest disappointment that general members were not given an opportunity to weigh up those bids in workshops similar to the cuts workshops held in the past, since the input of members could have led to a situation where the Council would not be looking at voting for a tax increase of 2.95%. In response, it was noted that every member of the Council had been given the opportunity to attend seminars on the budget, where information had been shared about the bids.
- It was argued that the seminars did not provide an opportunity to consider the bids properly, and instead, the members had been guided through the figures.
- It was noted, although the Welsh Government announcement that a living costs support payment of £150 would be available for every household residing in properties in Council Tax bands A-D, that this highlighted that the current system did not work. Also welcomed was the announcement made by the Government and Plaid Cymru that a change would happen in this field, and it was emphasised that this should happen as soon as possible.
- It was suggested that consideration should be given to allowing a Council Tax discount of more than 25% for single persons as it was much more difficult to pay bills when a household only had one salary.
- It was noted that nurses, who had worked so hard throughout the pandemic, would only receive a 2% pay increase this year, whilst councillors received 16%, which would cost around £160,000 extra for the Council. In response, it was explained that the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, and not the Council, was responsible for determining the allowances payable to elected members.
- It was asked whether the Council's reserves could be used for one year in order to delay the increase in Council Tax. In response, it was explained that £7m in general balances had been earmarked and other funds had been created for specific purposes. In terms of the funds that had been earmarked, £72m out of the £79m was there for specific reasons for the future. It was explained that using our reserves to avoid increasing the Council Tax was not a permanent answer, and should the Council start using reserves to fill gaps, the gap would always be there.
- It was asked whether it would be possible for us to live on what we had for a year, and see how things would be from next year onwards. In response, it was noted that the Council had received a relatively good settlement this year; however, the settlement for next year and the following year would be very difficult.

Members objected to the proposal to raise Council Tax by 2.95% on the following grounds:-

- That the Council had increased the tax by 40% over the past 10 years, but it offered fewer services than it did 10 years ago.
- That the situation was at crisis point in Gwynedd, with the costs of energy, fuel and food increasing more than ever, with an increasing number reliant on food banks.
- That farmers and rural businesses were working so hard, but received no support from any source.
- That we were living in ivory towers in Gwynedd Council, and maybe that we did not fully appreciate the circumstances of people in the county.
- That we would have hoped that an increase of around 1% would have sufficed this year to maintain services with the reserves we had, in order to convey the message that we are concerned about our residents' circumstances.
- That this was not the correct time to increase the tax, particularly as people had gone through the hardship of the pandemic, and this would create more stress and worry for hard-working families.

Other members supported the proposal on the following grounds:-

- That everyone had been given an opportunity to submit alternative proposals on a balanced budget, but that nobody had submitted any other ideas, or made suggestions as to where the Council should make cuts in order to avoid increasing the tax.
- Unless the proposal was accepted, then more essential services for the vulnerable people of Gwynedd would have to be cut.
- That the only option was to accept the budget as it stood so that the people of Gwynedd received the best service that could be offered to them under the circumstances.
- That the Council Tax system was not a Gwynedd Council system, and that all members were there to improve the lives of the people of the county.
- That a finger needed to be pointed to the Westminster Government and to call for independence for Wales so that we could run our own budget in our own nation.

In response to a question, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that it was not possible to separate the recommendation on setting the budget from the recommendation on setting the capital programme. He explained that if either recommendation fell, the other would subsequently fall, since both matters were interrelated.

To close, the Cabinet Member noted:-

- Although a better than expected settlement was received this year, acknowledgement had come from the seminars and the Audit and Governance Committee that services had been under pressure, and this was the main reason why a smaller increase in the Council Tax could not be recommended.
- That he was concerned about the circumstances of the county's residents and he emphasised that anyone who was experiencing difficulties in paying the tax should contact the Finance Department.

A registered vote was called for on the motion.

Councillor Stephen Churchman noted that he had just returned to the meeting after leaving for almost an hour, and he asked whether he had the right to vote. In response, the Monitoring Officer explained that he had the right to vote, provided that he was confident that he was aware of the content of the report, etc. The member confirmed that he had prepared thoroughly before the meeting.

According to Procedural Rules, the following vote on the motion was recorded:

In favour (36) Councillors:- Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Beca Brown, Stephen Churchman, Steve Collings, Annwen Daniels, Elwyn Edwards, Aled Evans, Simon Glyn, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Selwyn Griffiths, Annwen Hughes, R. Medwyn Hughes, Judith Humphreys, Nia Jeffreys, Peredur Jenkins, Aled Wyn Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Gareth Tudor Morris Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Cai Larsen, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Dafydd Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson, Dyfrig Siencyn, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas, Cemlyn Williams and Gethin Glyn Williams.

Against (30) – Councillors:- Dylan Bullard, R. Glyn Daniels, Anwen Davies, Dylan Fernley, Peter Antony Garlick, Alwyn Gruffydd, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, Aeron M.Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones, Keith Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Beth Lawton, Dewi Owen, Jason Parry, Nigel Pickavance, Rheinallt Puw, Peter Read, Elfed P. Roberts, Gareth A. Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Angela Russell, Mike Stevens, Hefin Underwood, Elfed Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Owain Williams.

Abstentions (0)

The Chair noted that the motion had been carried.

## RESOLVED

1. To approve the recommendations of the Cabinet, namely:-
  - (a) To set a budget of £295,232,820 for 2022/23, to be funded by £213,210,400 of Government Grant and £82,022,420 of Council Tax income, with an increase of 2.95%.
  - (b) To establish a capital programme of £59,074,980 in 2022/23, to be funded from the sources noted in Appendix 4 of the report.
  
2. To note that the Cabinet Member for Finance, in a decision notice dated 9 November 2021, approved the calculation of the following amounts for 2022/23 in accordance with Regulations made under Section 33 (5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (“The Act”):
  - (a) 53,715.10 being the amount calculated as Gwynedd's Tax Base in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations 1995 as amended, as its Council Tax base for the year.
  - (b) Part of the Council’s Area - Community Tax Base -

Aberdaron	571.25	Llanddeiniolen	1,840.10
Aberdyfi	1,095.65	Llandderfel	501.76
Abergwyngregyn	124.71	Llanegryn	164.55
Abermaw (Barmouth)	1,210.43	Llanelltyd	308.89
Arthog	654.41	Llanengan	2,289.52
Y Bala	781.39	Llanfair	335.58
Bangor	3,974.34	Llanfihangel y Pennant	232.58
Beddgelert	323.40	Llanfrothen	233.04
Betws Garmon	138.27	Llangelynnin	433.07
Bethesda	1,701.20	Llangywer	145.28
Bontnewydd	436.43	Llanllechid	348.06
Botwnnog	460.05	Llanllyfni	1,425.75
Brithdir a Llanfachreth	457.62	Llannor	906.33
Bryncrug	340.19	Llanrug	1,137.62
Buan	227.96	Llanuwchllyn	316.77



Caernarfon	3,640.35	Llanwnda	807.58
Clynnog Fawr	470.35	Llanycil	205.27
Corris	305.84	Llanystumdwy	885.48
Criccieth	972.85	Maentwrog	303.24
Dolbenmaen	624.58	Mawddwy	362.81
Dolgellau	1,275.63	Nefyn	1,535.07
Dyffryn Ardudwy	817.14	Pennal	231.82
Y Felinheli	1,165.68	Penrhyndeudraeth	792.98
Ffestiniog	1,786.14	Pentir	1,272.62
Y Ganllwyd	88.69	Pistyll	264.01
Harlech	821.55	Porthmadog	2,160.67
Llanaelhaearn	466.26	Pwllheli	1,779.02
Llanbedr	351.64	Talsarnau	343.74
Llanbedrog	780.02	Trawsfynydd	506.49
Llanberis	788.78	Tudweiliog	478.76
Llandwrog	1,051.46	Tywyn	1,691.37
Llandygai	1,001.64	Waunfawr	569.37

namely the amounts calculated as the Council Tax Base amounts for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

3. That the following amounts now be calculated by the Council for the year 2022/23 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Act:-

- (a) £443,927,600 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) to (e) of the Act (gross expenditure).
- (b) £146,536,120 Being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32 (3)(a) to (c) of the Act (income).
- (c) £297,391,480 Being the sum that corresponds with the difference between the above aggregate 3 (a) and the above aggregate 3 (b) calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budgetary requirements for the year (net budget).
- (ch) £212,714,737 Being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its fund in respect of redistributed Non-domestic Rates and Revenue Support Grant, less the estimated cost to the Council of discretionary Non-domestic rate relief granted.
- (d) £1,576.40 Being the amount in 3(c) above, less the sum in 3(ch) above, all divided by the sum noted in 2(a) above, that was calculated by the Council in accordance with 33(1) of the Act, which is the basic amount of Council Tax for the year (Gwynedd Council tax and the average community council tax).
- (dd) £2,654,323.06 Being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act (community council precepts).

- (e) £1,526.99 Being the sum in 3(d) above, less the result of dividing the amount in 3(dd) above divided by the amount in 2(a) above, that was calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates (Band D for Gwynedd Council Tax only).

- (f) For parts of the Council's area -

Aberdaron	1,553.25	Llanddeiniolen	1,544.27
Aberdyfi	1,562.10	Llandderfel	1,544.93
Abergwyngregyn	1,559.06	Llanegryn	1,563.45
Abermaw (Barmouth)	1,579.04	Llanelltyd	1,551.27
Arthog	1,546.86	Llanengan	1,551.01
Y Bala	1,561.54	Llanfair	1,574.67
Bangor		Llanfihangel	y
	1,627.98	Pennant	1,576.54
Beddgelert	1,579.56	Llanfrothen	1,566.90
Betws Garmon	1,545.79	Llangelynnin	1,550.70
Bethesda	1,601.16	Llangywer	1,556.24
Bontnewydd	1,569.38	Llanllechid	1,572.27
Botwnnog	1,541.12	Llanllyfni	1,562.06
Brithdir	a		
Llanfachreth	1,553.21	Llannor	1,549.06
Bryncrug	1,565.45	Llanrug	1,594.68
Buan	1,543.44	Llanuwchllyn	1,571.19
Caernarfon	1,586.51	Llanwnda	1,563.27
Clynnog Fawr	1,569.51	Llanycil	1,548.91
Corris	1,557.50	Llanystumdwy	1,547.72
Cricieth	1,578.39	Maentwrog	1,546.94
Dolbenmaen	1,555.81	Mawddwy	1,556.48
Dolgellau	1,587.35	Nefyn	1,578.78
Dyffryn Ardudwy	1,588.18	Pennal	1,562.79
Y Felinheli	1,566.45	Penrhyndeudraeth	1,579.32
Ffestiniog	1,655.76	Pentir	1,570.21
Y Ganllwyd	1,560.82	Pistyll	1,572.44
Harlech	1,612.19	Porthmadog	1,555.95
Llanaelhaearn	1,580.61	Pwllheli	1,577.58
Llanbedr	1,569.65	Talsarnau	1,590.99
Llanbedrog	1,557.76	Trawsfynydd	1,566.48
Llanberis	1,570.09	Tudweiliog	1,541.61
Llandwrog	1,593.56	Tywyn	1,580.40
Llandygai	1,555.31	Waunfawr	1,548.07

being the amounts given by adding the amounts of the item or special items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above, to the sum given in 3(e) above, divided in each case by the amount of 2(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

- (ff) In respect of part of the Council's area, the figures noted in Appendix 1, being the amounts given by multiplying the sums specified in 3(f) above by the number

which, in the proportion set out in Section 5 (1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36 (1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

4. That it be noted that for the year 2022/23 the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner has stated the following amounts in a precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Band I
211.20	246.40	281.60	316.80	387.20	457.60	528.00	633.60	739.20

Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3(ff) and 4 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Act, hereby sets the amounts noted in Appendix 2 as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2022/23 for each of the categories of dwellings shown in the Appendix.

#### 10. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2022/23 (INCLUDES INVESTMENT AND BORROWING STRATEGIES)

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Ioan Thomas, submitted a report, providing a high-level overview on the manner capital expenditure, capital funding and the treasury's management activity contributed to the provision of local public services. The report also gave an overview of the way associated risks could be managed, and the implications for future financial sustainability.

**RESOLVED to adopt the Capital Strategy for 2022/23.**

#### 11. NORTH WALES POPULATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT DRAFT REPORT 2022

The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Councillor Dafydd Meurig, submitted a report providing an overview, and seeking the support of the Full Council to approve the North Wales Population Needs Assessment 2022, drawn up as a requirement under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The Project Manager, Adults, Health and Well-being Team, elaborated further on the content of the report.

Councillor Gwynfor Owen enquired whether he should declare an interest as he had recently used the North Wales Integrated Autism Service, and as he was also involved with other matters within the field. In response, the Monitoring Officer explained that the member was within his rights as this was a report of a general assessment for North Wales.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions. The following matters were raised by individual members:

- It was noted that it was understood that this was a live document, and it was enquired how quickly it could be changed. In response, it was explained that the document submitted was a version that would be approved by the Council today, it was hoped, and by the Regional Partnership Board further along in the month, before it would be forwarded to Government and published. The officers were undertaking more detailed work on Gwynedd's details and needs, therefore anything could be adapted as a part of that work. The document would also be reviewed within 5 years, but the officers would also carry out some work during that time. It was noted that the Gwynedd

document would be a separate assessment, that was not linked to any statutory publication date, and this would be the actual live document that would be available to amend and add to it from day-to-day.

- Concern was expressed that members only had five days to read this 450-page document, and it was asked how it had been possible for them to scrutinise the matter and ask detailed questions. It was also suggested, since members could only speak once on a matter in the Full Council, that important matters were being pushed through without discussion. It was also questioned how valuable a document of this size would be for the people of Gwynedd. In terms of the observations regarding the 'live' document, it was noted that the members had heard about such things previously, and had subsequently found out that it was not possible to change those documents for years. There was also concern that the new Council would be told that they could not change the document, as the previous Council had adopted it, and a call was made for the Cabinet Member and the officers to be more considerate from now on.
- It was noted that the Care Scrutiny Committee had scrutinised this matter, and had supported and sympathised with the officers, who had had to prepare the documents in a very short time-frame.

To close, the Cabinet Member noted:-

- That the officers had completed heroic work within a considerably tight timetable, in line with the requirements of the legislation.
- That the Government was asked to allow more time due to the pandemic, but that this permission had not been granted.

The Chair noted that he was also of the opinion that it was impossible for members to scrutinise such a bulky report within 5 days, and he asked the Cabinet Member to take the comments into consideration and pass them on.

**RESOLVED to approve the Assessment of the North Wales Population Needs 2022.**

## **12. REVIEW REPORT - JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Chair explained that a report on the next step of the process of reviewing the Local Development Plan was being submitted, and that this was not an opportunity to have a discussion on individual planning policies. He explained, should the Council agree to proceed to hold a full review of the current plan, then there would be many opportunities to have input into individual policies and discuss specific fields at a later date.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Gareth Griffith, submitted a report seeking approval from the full Council to publish a Review Report and forward it to Welsh Government, in order to proceed with the work of preparing an Amended Plan.

The Assistant Head of the Environment Department elaborated on the content of the report.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions. The following matters were raised by individual members:-

- It was noted that a lot of work had gone into the report, and the Cabinet Member and officers involved with this were thanked.
- It was expressed that the phraseology and bureaucracy associated with the document was immense and incredible, and that the entire planning system was so complex, so that the majority of people, including elected members, did not fully understand what was going on. It was suggested that the latest consultation work could be used as an example of that, since only 5 members had responded to this all-important consultation.

- Disappointment was expressed that officers were not of the opinion that the one out of almost 80 indicators used to save the Welsh language highlighted that harm was being caused to the language, and that it appeared, without Brexit and Covid, that no changes would be mentioned at all.
- Concern was expressed about what exactly was being submitted, and what exactly would be returned from Welsh Government, and worse than that, there was major concern that the Joint Planning Policy Committee would be dealing with any changes.
- It was noted, in 2017, that the Joint Planning Policy Committee had given its approval to bring the plan before the Council, and it had been passed there by a whisker. All members could do at the time was approve it or refuse it, and it was not possible to ask for more time in order for the new members at the time to have an opportunity to discuss the policies.
- It was noted that we were seeing, time and time again, that planning policies were working against the wishes of members to seek to protect our Welsh communities, and it was concerned, when a response was received from Welsh Government, that the new members would not understand the importance or significance of this.
- A wish to abolish the Joint Planning Policy Committee was expressed, so that Gwynedd Council implemented this on its own, but it was concerned that this would not happen, despite all evidence highlighting that there was a major difference between our wishes in Gwynedd and the wishes of Anglesey.

In response to these observations, the Cabinet Member noted:-

- That sessions had been arranged for members, where the Planning Policy Department submitted information about this part of the review, and should the Council decide to forward it to Cardiff, the hard work would happen after the Elections in May.
- That the work would continue and the Department had declared its willingness to listen, hold more sessions and consult.

The observations of the previous speaker were reiterated by other members, who noted:-

- That members had only been given five days to read this 152-page document, and it was asked how they had been able to scrutinise and approve the report, particularly since we were now almost 4 hours into this meeting.
- That these things were being dumped on us and being pushed through, and doubtless that the new Council would be told that they would not be able to change the document as the previous Council had adopted it.
- That members had been told in 2017 that this was a 'live' document, but it was subsequently realised that it could not be changed for 3.5 years.
- That sending this plan to the Government as it was did nothing but confirm the status quo, and we should think outside the box and be revolutionary.
- That a number of the points raised during the public consultation, and that were at the core of our vision, i.e. the Welsh language, affordable housing for local people, local market housing, second homes and holiday homes, tourism and over-tourism, the Well-being Act, etc., was only a part of what was being submitted to the Government, and it was asked for assurance that approving the recommendation did not close the door on any full and detailed discussion on all of these matters.
- There was concern that all we would be doing by adopting the recommendation was confirm what had been voted in favour of, by one vote, in 2017, with only some minor changes made.
- That the question of separating from Anglesey was a question that the new Council would have to seriously consider.

It was asked whether approving the recommendation bound the Council to a joint local plan in the future. In response, it was explained that the current system of collaborating with Anglesey was not any under discussion at this meeting. Should there be a wish to make a

different decision on that, the right was there, and the Council could discuss that in the future. It was noted further that the brief of the Full Council was that they wished to see a full review of the plan, and for this to happen quickly, and the first step to allow that to happen would be to publish a Review Report and send it to Welsh Government.

In response to some of the observations, an individual member noted:-

- That it was not seen how having a full review of the plan could confirm the status quo in any way.
- That he was disappointed with the allegation that elected members did not understand the planning system, and he had found that insulting.
- That some were of the opinion that the 3.5 years it took to review the plan was too much time, and that it would be better to have a way to speed this up; however, it had to be borne in mind that the Council had passed this as a principle and had written to the Government to ask for the process to be sped up, but that the Government had said that this was not possible.
- That this did not close the door on a discussion, but rather opened it, and the important points raised during the public consultation would be discussed in detail over the coming years.

In his closing comments, the Cabinet Member noted:-

- Although he accepted the comment about the size of the document, that the report had been available on the Council's website for some months, but one had to go and look for it.
- That he was disappointed that so few members had participated in the first consultation, and he pleaded on everyone to participate in the second consultation following the Election.
- That the observations submitted during the first consultation were being considered in the second consultation, and therefore, there was no need to submit the same observations twice.

**RESOLVED to agree to publish the Review Report in Appendix 1 to the report and to present it to Welsh Government, so that the preparation of the Replacement Plan can commence.**

### **13. RECOMMENDATION OF THE INTERVIEW PANEL - APPOINTMENT OF LAY MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Chair of the Interview Panel, Councillor John Pughe Roberts, submitted a report asking the full Council to appoint Mr Hywel Eifion Jones, Mrs Sharon Warnes, Mr Elwyn Rhys Parry and Mrs Claire Hitchcock as lay members of the Audit and Governance committee for a period of 5 years.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions. The following matters were raised by individual members:

- Disappointment was expressed that so few had applied for the role.
- It was suggested that it would have been of interest for the Council to obtain some more background information on the 4 persons that could be recommended for appointment. In response, the Monitoring Officer explained that the usual process had been followed, and that the Council needed to be satisfied that the interview panel had followed the appointment criteria, and had submitted recommendations that corresponded to those criteria.

The Chair of the Interview Panel confirmed that the panel was completely happy with these 4 persons.

**RESOLVED to appoint Mr Hywel Eifion Jones, Mrs Sharon Warnes, Mr Elwyn Rhys Parry and Mrs Clare Hitchcock as Lay Members of the Governance and Audit Committee for a period of 5 years.**

#### **14. RE-APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Councillor Gwynfor Owen declared a personal interest as, in his translation business, he received a great deal of work from Mr Aled Jones.

The member was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and he withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report noting that the membership term of Mr Aled Jones, an independent member on the Standards Committee, was ending, and recommended to the Council that he be re-appointed to serve for a further four-year term.

It was noted, as an existing member of the Standards Committee, that information on Mr Aled Jones was available in the Standards Committee's Annual Report.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions.

A member expressed his discontent that no background information was submitted regarding this person, and he emphasised the need for openness and transparency, noting that there was a need to look at how these appointments were being made.

The Chair noted that he was given to understand that this person had been serving on the Standards Committee already, and that he had done praiseworthy work in the past.

**RESOLVED to re-appoint Mr Aled Jones as an independent member of the Standards Committee to serve for a further four-year term.**

#### **15. COMMITTEES CALENDAR 2022-23**

The Head of Democracy Services submitted a calendar for the dates of Council meetings for 2022/23.

Members were given an opportunity to submit observations and ask questions. The following matters were raised by individual members:

- It was questioned whether there was a point approving the calendar, since many of the current members would not be serving on the Council after May. In response, it was noted, despite the observation, that the calendar for the year needed to be arranged and dates put in place, and for officers to make arrangements, with plenty of notice.
- In response to a question regarding the practicality of holding a meeting of the Council on 2 March, 2023, that should an additional day's leave for staff be approved on 1 March, it was confirmed that this would not cause any difficulties whatsoever.

**RESOLVED to adopt the Committees Calendar for 2022/23.**

#### **16. NOTICES OF MOTION**

- (A) Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Judith Humphreys, in accordance with Section 4.20 of the Constitution, and it was seconded:-

**"That the Council calls on Welsh Government, Westminster Government and the relevant organisations to commit to:**

- professionalise women's sport so that women have the same opportunities and pay as men.**
- ensure that women are represented on sports bodies at all levels.**
- ensure facilities suitable for women's sport particularly football and rugby.**
- that women's sport is given coverage equal to that of men's sport in the media and Press."**

The member set out the context to her motion, noting that:

- That fewer women than men took part in sports, and that women were more likely to not continue with sports after they started.
- According to the "Women's Sports Foundation" established by Billie Jean King, the main reason for having equal opportunities in sports was in order for women to also receive the important benefits obtained by participating in sports - i.e. the psychological, physiological and social benefits.
- That this was a matter that merited serious attention from public health officers, sports leaders, educators and our politicians.
- Historically, that women did not have the right to participate in sports, but that the sporting culture in our society to date was more male-orientated than female-orientated, with greater status given to male sports, because male sports received much more investment and it was much more obvious and visible in the media.
- According to the "Women's and Sports Fitness Foundation", that commercial investment, and the attention that women's sports received in the media, were intertwined.
- In order to increase women's participation in sports, women needed to see inspiring role models in the media, and receive the encouragement that men received.
- Although S4C was to be praised for the attention they gave women's sports on the whole; women were much less visible in the media and the Press than men.
- In 2018, a report on the visibility of women's sports in the media across European countries was published. Five countries were under the spotlight, and the results of the report showed that the proportion of women's sports broadcasting did not raise above 10% in any of the five countries. Around 7% was the percentage for broadcasting women's sport in Britain!
- Also, unfortunately, when women received attention, the focus could be on what they wore, instead of their athletic conquests.
- That there was very little commercial investment in women's sports. This means that women's pay is less, as well as less opportunity to have quality coaches and facilities.
- Considering the lack of attention, the type of attention, the lack of promotion and investment, it was no surprise that women had less motivation to participate.
- That it was no surprise that women were worried about being criticised, worried that they were not good enough, and that many women pulled out of sports when they were teenagers.
- As a result, women lost out on the benefits to their health and self-confidence - the physical and mental benefits, and participation in sports could also improve academic results. Also, it was important to consider that a significant percentage of women aged over 50 suffered from osteoporosis, and physical exercise was essential to sustain bone density.

Members expressed support to the proposal and noted:-

- That it would be good to see someone from the sporting world coming forward as a champion to the proposal.



- That the inequality between men and women was so prominent in many fields, and that the proposer had encompassed the reasons for that really well.
- That there were pay inequalities in men's football as well, with the stars earning millions and those at the bottom of the league almost starving.
- That there was a need to change the culture for the psychological, physical and social benefit of all, not just women, and that this was such a timely proposal after Covid.
- That it was believed that Welsh Government saw the value in this, and that there were some quite simple things that they could do to lead the way.

**RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-**

**"That the Council calls on Welsh Government, Westminster Government and the relevant organisations to commit to:**

- professionalise women's sport so that women have the same opportunities and pay as men.
- ensure that women are represented on sports bodies at all levels.
- ensure facilities suitable for women's sport particularly football and rugby.
- that women's sport is given coverage equal to that of men's sport in the media and Press."

- (B) Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Beca Brown, in accordance with Section 4.20 of the Constitution and it was seconded:-

**"With the cost of living rising sharply and people and families often having to choose between eating or heating, there is more demand than even before on the services of local food banks and food schemes. According to FareShare Cymru, there were four food schemes in North Wales before the pandemic, but that figure is expected to rise to approximately 40 by April this year.**

**Local voluntary groups must pay an annual membership fee to receive food from schemes such as FareShare and, during lockdown, Welsh Government funded the first year of membership only.**

**However, after the first year, local food schemes must find the money to pay their own membership fee, which can be approximately £3,000 a year.**

**We call upon Welsh Government to commit to funding 70% of the cost of food (i.e. the membership fee of FareShare or similar distribution schemes) for a period of 5 years in order to protect these local food schemes which provide a crucial service to people and families at a time of great hardship."**

The member set out the context to her motion, noting that:-

- As FareShare delivered surplus food, that would otherwise be thrown out, that the scheme not only provided necessary support to people in need, but also contributed to reducing food waste.
- That the substantial increase in the number of food schemes in North Wales had happened before the cost of living crisis had really struck, and who knows how many food schemes would arise across the county and the rest of the country in another year.
- Although the money received from Welsh Government to fund the first year's membership in the FareShare scheme was greatly appreciated, having assurance that 70% of the membership money had been paid by the Government for a five-year period, whilst people faced the double challenge of finding their feet after the pandemic and dealing with the cost of living crisis, would take the stress and anxiety off food schemes of having to think where the money would come from. This, in turn, would give

assurance to the people who received the food that this essential service would not end abruptly.

Due to a glitch in the audio during her presentation, the proposer was asked to send a written copy to the members after the meeting.

Members expressed support to the proposal and noted:-

- That the Councillors for Bangor and Plaid Cymru Bangor volunteers supported the food scheme established by Councillor Steve Collings, and that he had introduced the idea of FareShare in Bangor.
- That the motion was praiseworthy and ensured that vulnerable people and people in need received the food they needed, and addressed social inequality. It also helped to save the planet and was a way of reducing waste.
- That it was important that schemes like this were known to everyone across the county as the need in rural areas such as Meirionnydd was as great as that in the largest towns. It was required to obtain Government support to this, and a plea was made for any scheme to be implemented across the county.
- All the volunteers in Bethesda who collected food from the supermarkets were thanked.
- Although the motion was supported, it was outrageous that people were reliant on food banks in the twenty-first century, and it was noted that this again was an example of how the system was broken and unfit for purpose.

**RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-**

**"With the cost of living rising sharply and people and families often having to choose between eating or heating, there is more demand than even before on the services of local food banks and food schemes. According to FareShare Cymru, there were four food schemes in North Wales before the pandemic, but that figure is expected to rise to approximately 40 by April this year.**

**Local voluntary groups must pay an annual membership fee to receive food from schemes such as FareShare and, during lockdown, Welsh Government funded the first year of membership only.**

**However, after the first year, local food schemes must find the money to pay their own membership fee, which can be approximately £3,000 a year.**

**We call upon Welsh Government to commit to funding 70% of the cost of food (i.e. the membership fee of FareShare or similar distribution schemes) for a period of 5 years in order to protect these local food schemes which provide a crucial service to people and families at a time of great hardship."**

## **17. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS NOTICES OF MOTION**

Submitted for information:-

- (a) A letter from the Westminster Government in response to Councillor Elwyn Edwards's notice of motion at the Council meeting on 7 October, 2021, regarding acknowledging St David's Day formally as a bank holiday in Wales.
- (B) A letter from Welsh Government in response to Councillor Gethin Glyn Williams's notice of motion at the Council meeting on 2 December, 2021, regarding the creation of woodlands in Wales.

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 6.00pm.

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**CHAIR**