

CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET

Date of meeting:	20 July 2023
Cabinet member:	Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn
Contact Officer:	Dafydd Gibbard – Chief Executive
Item title:	Assistant Head - Transport

Report to a meeting of Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

That the Council releases £265,000 from the transformation fund to finance the position of Assistant Head of Transport for a period of 3 years to begin with.

2. REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

In accordance with the procedure for approving expenditure from the Transformation Fund, any application to the fund above £100,000 is required to receive the Cabinet's formal approval.

3. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

3.1 As a result of a management review, the position of Senior Transport Manager was abolished in 2019, and the view at the time was that we should try to manage without the role.

3.2 Since then, the area of work has grown and the pressure and demand on the department has increased.

3.3 The type of issues that create pressure on the department in the transport field include:

a) Ardudwy Green Corridor

The "Ardudwy Green Corridor" is the package of improvements to promote active travel and green travel, along the A496 corridor, from Llandecwyn to Barmouth. The objective of the Plan is to improve access to public transport (buses and trains) in Meirionnydd, improve safety and traffic control in the village of Llanbedr and develop infrastructure in order to maximise economic potential, for the whole area, from Llanbedr Airport to the future. These works include the development of the Llanbedr low speed bypass.

b) Active travel

As one of our strategic priorities in the Council's Plan, the Department is responsible for developing and maintaining a network of active travel routes to promote the use of cycling and walking throughout the County.

c) Public Transport and the bus emergency scheme

The Department is responsible for the County's bus contracts and providing quality transport to the residents of Gwynedd in a cost effective and sustainable manner. With a significant increase in fuel costs over the past year, the Department has been key to discussions with the service providers and the Welsh Government to ensure that services continue to run despite the challenge and to administer the bus emergency scheme payments.

d) Public Transport review

One of the strategic projects of the Council's Plan for the next five years is to review the current public transport provision with the aim of developing a public transport network that will be convenient, reliable, and reasonably priced in order to allow the residents of Gwynedd to travel easily every day of the week. This plan will also introduce new electric buses.

e) 20mph scheme

The Department is responsible for introducing 20mph speed limits in urban areas, which come into force in Wales in September 2023. The work to implement this involves significant consultation work and the introduction of traffic orders.

f) Car parks and parking enforcement

In addition to the County's public car parks, the Department deals with requests for yellow lines to overcome parking problems in specific areas. Similar to the 20mph scheme, the introduction of yellow lines requires a lengthy statutory process. With an increase in visitors to the area since the start of the lockdown period, the number of enquiries the unit receives have increased significantly.

g) Matters arising from the Wales Transport Commission report

The report presents recommendations in order to alter travel patterns in north Wales in order to reduce carbon emissions resulting from travel.

h) Electric Vehicle charging network

Our Climate and Nature Plan is also one of the Council's priorities and is included in the Council's Plan. The Department leads on a project to develop the electric vehicle charging network throughout the County, which is one of the work streams of the Climate and Nature Plan and is vital to the resilience of the County's infrastructure for electric vehicles.

i) North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) and the regional transport plan

The Department is expected to collaborate and contribute to the development of the CJC and regional transport plan, which is now a regional requirement in accordance with the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee Regulations 2021.

- 3.4 In addition to the above, over the last two years, I have been visiting elected members to discuss their ward matters. Transport related issues are raised regularly by members, and for many, at the top of their list of priorities. It is an area that affects everyone, and it has become apparent that there has been significant increase in demand for the services.
- 3.5 Considering how this area has developed and the feedback I have received from elected Members about their local concerns, I am of the opinion that investment is needed in order to be able to achieve more in these areas. It is now clear that the experiment of trying to cope without this role was not successful, and that instead we failed to achieve as much as we would have liked. Our current structure, which has a significant gap between the role of the head of department and the role of service managers, does not allow us to to make the most of opportunities and fulfil the Department and the Council's aspirations in this important area.
- 3.6 To this end and following a discussion with the Head of Department, I have come to the conclusion that it is necessary to establish the post of Assistant Head to lead transport matters as a whole. Although the purpose of this report is a request for temporary resources the intention is to identify a permanent funding source when the opportunity arises.

4. ANY CONSULTATIONS HELD PRIOR TO THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE DECISION

The views of the Statutory Officers:

Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety

Head of Finance:

The Transformation Fund is in place to support the Council's priorities. The Council's draft Accounts show that £11.2m was in the fund as at 31 March 2023, but much of this has already been committed to various schemes, including the one-off bids for 2023-24 that were approved by Cabinet on 28 March 2023. This means there is £4.3m in the Transformation Fund uncommitted and available to fund this bid.

Therefore, from a financial proprietary perspective adequate resources are in place to fund the Assistance Head post for three years, and it is a matter for Cabinet members to decide if this is a priority for the use of the Fund.