

<b>NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	Communities Scrutiny Committee
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	24 January 2017
<b>TITLE</b>	Beach Management Cuts
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Llŷr Jones, Senior Manager - Economy and Community
<b>CABINET MEMBER</b>	Cllr Mandy Williams-Davies
<b>PURPOSE</b>	To report of the implementation of financial cuts in the beach management budgets

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 It was resolved at the Scrutiny Committee's preparatory meeting to ask for a report on the impact of the cuts undertaken by the Council to the beach management budgets. The purpose of this report is to submit information about these cuts and to consider whether or not there were any unforeseen outcomes to the cuts.

## **2. BUGETARY CUTS WHICH HAVE BEEN APPROVED**

- 2.1 Historically, the Economy and Community Department, via the Maritime and Country Parks Service, has responsibility for managing as much as 301km of the coastline in terms of health and safety, maintenance, cleanliness, managing power boats and jet-skis and coastal leisure activities. The responsibilities also include parking and access management for vehicle, powerboats and pleasure boats for launching purposes, managing and enforcing dog control orders, supervising beach safety and providing information to members of the public.
- 2.2 When considering different cuts, different options were incorporated as potential cuts and reference was made to the features related to beach awards namely
- i. Delete the entire beach management service (saving of £81,900)
  - ii. Management of Blue Flag beaches only (saving of £55,700)
  - iii. Manage Blue Flag and Green Flag beaches only (saving of £24,200)
- 2.3 At a meeting on 3 March 2016, the full Council resolved to implement a programme of cuts in order to meet its financial shortfall. One of the cuts approved within that programme was the option that the Council would 'Manage Blue flag and Green flag beaches only'.

- 2.4 The approved cut involves limiting the beach management activities to beaches that have won Blue Flag or Green Flag awards such as Barmouth, Dinas Dinlle, Aberdaron, Abersoch, Pwllheli, Morfa Bychan, Tywyn, Cricieth, Aberdyfi, Harlech, Llandanwg, Fairbourne and Porth Neigwl.
- 2.5 When considering the effects of 'managing Blue Flag and Green Flag beaches only' it was anticipated that there would be implications such as:
- No management arrangements for other beaches in the county
  - An increase in safety risks
  - Undermining the location's reputation for coastal activities
  - Negative impact on the tourism sector in these communities.
- 2.6 The beach management function is not statutory, and it was considered that risk assessments would be prepared for every beach in order to consider additional signage and / or alternative management measures as an option.

### **3. ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CUTS**

- 3.1 Following the Full Council's decision on 3 March 2016, the programme of cuts became operational, and the budgets for the 2016/17 financial year were reduced to reflect this.
- 3.2 Nevertheless, in forming arrangements for implementing the cuts with immediate effect, a number of issues came to light, including
- The implementation period between the decision and the start of the tourist season was limited
  - The service was very eager to endeavour to mitigate the anticipated effects
  - The need to ensure that alternative safety measures were in place
  - Possible opportunities to work with local establishments for alternative management arrangements
- 3.3 Consequently, the 2016 season was considered a transitional period, and although budgets had been reduced, interim arrangements were implemented at some beaches. The following is a summary of the arrangements set for 2016:

a) Nefyn and Morfa Nefyn beaches

Interim arrangements were put in place based on a previous arrangement of collaboration between Nefyn Town Council and the National Trust to provide beach wardens for the 2016 season. The Service has confirmed that this arrangement will not continue into the 2017 season. Gwynedd Council does not have responsibility as

the owner of the beach or the foreshore, and it was considered that assisting with interim arrangements during 2016 would offer an opportunity for relevant organisations to prepare and put in place appropriate arrangements.

b) Machroes beach, near Abersoch

The beach at Machroes adjoins the Abersoch Blue Flag beach, and contributes to the functions of the main beach. It is considered that there is an opportunity to work with local establishments and the business sector to develop alternative arrangements. During 2016, the arrangements for parking fees were reviewed and this brought in additional income to meet the financial deficit. It is anticipated that more time will be needed to develop the model and confirm the permanent arrangements.

c) Trefor beach

New arrangements were implemented at Trefor beach as no beach wardens were appointed during 2016 and the vehicle access to the beach was restricted. It is considered that there are further opportunities to work with a local society in order to build upon last year's arrangements and formalise arrangements and suitable access for annual mooring holders and annual launching permits in the area. It is envisaged that the proposed arrangements would offer suitable measures to mitigate risks associated with safety and possible conflict on the beach.

d) Abererch beach (Glandon)

No significant changes are proposed as part of the cuts (no beach wardens are employed).

e) Llanbedrog beach

Measures to manage vehicle access to the beach have been in place for a number of years, and the Service no longer employs beach warden. No significant changes are proposed as part of the cuts.

3.4 Of course, the work of changing beach management arrangements in the above location was in addition to the efforts to provide facilities and services at the Blue Flag and Green Flag beaches.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The lengths of Gwynedd's coast is greater than any other county's coastline in Wales. The coastline's resources offer a number of functions and are important assets to the area, its residents and visitors.
- 4.2 In identifying and considering different options that could contribute to the cuts agenda the impact of such cuts were considered. As outlined above, the work of implementing the cuts is already underway, however further work is needed to implement them in full. As a result, it is likely that it will be too early to try to evidence the impact of the cuts until they have been fully implemented.
- 4.3 Having said this, when considering the effect of the cut to 'managing Blue Flag and Green Flag beaches only', it was anticipated there would be implications (as noted in section 2.5 of the report). In making arrangements for implementing the cuts, every effort has been made by the Service to seek to reduce and / or mitigate such effects.
- 4.4 To date, the impacts of these cuts are consistent with what was anticipated. It is true to say that the beach management function is also dependent upon and influenced by factors that are beyond our control. However, it is not considered that there have been any outcomes which are very different to what was anticipated.
- 4.5 The Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the contents of the report.