

THE COUNCIL THURSDAY, 12 JULY 2018

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**Present:** Councillor Annwen Hughes (Chair);  
Councillor Edgar Wyn Owen (Vice-chair).

**Councillors:** Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Freya Hannah Bentham, Dylan Bullard, Stephen Churchman, Steve Collings, Annwen Daniels, R.Glyn Daniels, Anwen Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Alan Jones Evans, Dylan Fernley, Peter Antony Garlick, Simon Glyn, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, Nia Jeffreys, Peredur Jenkins, Aeron M.Jones, Aled Wyn Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Charles W.Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Elwyn Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Keith Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Linda A.W.Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dilwyn Lloyd, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Dafydd Owen, Dewi Owen, W.Roy Owen, Jason Parry, Nigel Pickavance, Rheinallt Puw, Peter Read, Dewi Wyn Roberts, Elfed P.Roberts, Gareth A.Roberts, Paul Rowlinson, Angela Russell, Dyfrig Siencyn, Mike Stevens, Ioan Thomas, Cemlyn Williams, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gareth Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Owain Williams.

**Also in attendance:** Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards and Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Directors), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services / Monitoring Officer), Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department), Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Supporting Families Department), Rhun ap Gareth (Senior Solicitor / Deputy Monitoring Officer), Vera Jones (Democracy Manager), Llinos Edwards (Senior Operational Officer), Dewi Jones (Council Business Service Support Manager), Gareth James (Members' Manager - Support and Scrutiny) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support Officer).

**1. APOLOGIES**

Councillors Aled Evans, R.Medwyn Hughes, Sian Wyn Hughes, Judith Humphreys, Eryl Jones-Williams, Linda Morgan, John Pughe Roberts, W.Gareth Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Gareth Thomas, Hefin Underwood and Catrin Wager.

**2. MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the Council's Annual Meeting held on 3 May, 2018 as a true record.

**3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

Councillor Dewi Wyn Roberts declared a personal interest in item 11 on the agenda - Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18, as he was the Vice-chair of the Community Health Council and that the matter relating to health in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area had been discussed at that Council.

The member was not of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and he did not withdraw from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

**4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The following were congratulated:-

- Gwenan Ellis Jones, Gwynedd and Anglesey Welsh Language Charter Co-ordinator, for winning the 'Inspirational use of the Welsh Language' category at

the Professional Teaching Awards Cymru recently. Gwenan had won the award for her substantial contribution to formulating and developing the Language Charter which had been launched in Gwynedd in 2011.

- The Derwen Youth Project, which offered various activities for young people with disabilities in Gwynedd, for winning the 'Promoting equality and diversity' award at the 2018 Youth Work Excellence Awards in Wales recently.

**5. CORRESPONDENCE, COMMUNICATIONS, OR ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None to note.

**6. URGENT ITEMS**

None to note.

**7. QUESTIONS**

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

**(1) Question from Councillor Sion Jones**

"Has the Planning Department got reserves when implementing a commuted sum for developers?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Dafydd Meurig**

"Briefly, these are contributions from developers in relation to major developments where there is a contribution towards local improvements. For example, there is a £1.2m contribution from the Redrow company related to a large housing estate in Bangor and most of this will go towards education in the city. Therefore, to answer the question, I believe that approximately £1.95m of contributions in total have been received in recent years, including the Redrow money. Subsequently, some of the money has not been spent yet, but this has been earmarked and it will be spent appropriately and the entire system, of course, is managed by 106 agreements."

**A Supplementary Question by Councillor Sion Jones**

"Does the Member agree with me that the Local Development Plan is an opportunity to set more commuted sums on developments in order to give something back to communities across Gwynedd?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Dafydd Meurig**

"It is not possible to use these sums for anything except something that is related to planning applications. That is their purpose and this is what manages the system here and I'm sure that the planning system takes complete advantage of this money within what is allowed."

**(2) Question from Councillor Cai Larsen**

"With the transfer of Gwynedd Leisure Centres to a Limited Company in the Autumn, has there been any progress with the work of setting up the Company?"

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

"As you can see, everything has gone well, therefore, it is very pleasing to stand before everyone today with a very positive report. The company has been registered, a Shadow Board is in place and is operational and we are currently undergoing the TUPE process with staff. Again, this consultation is very positive and the union has been part of the process from the offset. They support it, the staff support it and also all staff have been part of the process to design the business plans. We are learning a lot and their opinion will be part of how the plan will be run. It has been fantastic. The only thing I am concerned about is the timescale, it is tight, there is a lot of work - I don't think the staff will have summer holidays. I'm very happy to answer questions, if you have any, after the meeting."

**(3) Question from Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd**

"How much of Gwynedd Council's resources, in officer time and cash, have been contributed and will be contributed in the future towards establishing the North Wales Growth Bid and its viability?"

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

"Every council in north Wales has agreed to contribute £50,000 towards the work of setting up an office for the programme in due course, and the two further education colleges and two higher education establishments are also contributing £25,000 each towards that work. I would venture to say that it is very difficult to measure in hours or in money how much I have invested in it. I have committed to our partners in north Wales that I am willing to represent them in the different discussions that we hold. As it happens, I was in London yesterday having a discussion with the relevant minister. Also, of course, staff from all councils have contributed to the background work here. Our Treasurer has contributed towards work on the finance side and our Monitoring Officer has been part of drawing out the governance agreement, which is on the agenda today. Therefore, substantial work is taking place and each council, in turn, contributes towards the work, but we are currently taking a leading role and I believe that this is important."

**A Supplementary Question from Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd**

"In light of the fact that a quarter of the Head of Economy and Community Department's time is spent on this work and half of the Corporate Director's work, who is doing their work in their absence?"

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

"We have an economic regeneration service, and we have had a meeting with the Chief Executive, for example, to ensure that we are capable of enabling our Director to undertake this work, and this is important work that could bring in substantial benefit to this Council in future. I think the investment is worth it. If you believe otherwise, fine, but that is my opinion. I believe it is important that we commit as much as we can so that we can say that this bid is a success for the benefit of, not only Gwynedd residents, but all residents in north Wales. This is part of all our responsibility and it is also part, of course, of the day to day work of our officers, our economy service and also our Directors".

**8. GWYNEDD CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18**

Submitted - the annual report of the Corporate Parenting Panel 2017/18 by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, which highlighted the role and responsibilities

of the Council to act as corporate parents for looked after children, shared information about the panel's implementation over the past year and outlined the panel's intentions for the future.

He noted further that it had been reported at the end of a full inspection of the Children's Service by Care Inspectorate Wales in May this year that the Corporate Parenting Panel was positive and developmental in nature, and that this, in turn, would ensure that looked after children and young people in Gwynedd received suitable support throughout their looked after period and beyond.

The Cabinet Member thanked panel members for their work and members of the Care Scrutiny Committee for their interest and positive input to the department's work.

In response to questions from members, the Cabinet Member explained:-

- Although the foster placement extension scheme "*When I am Ready*" had been targeted for young people aged between 18 and 21, that the Council continued to be responsible for young people until they were 25, but that support was optional for them by then.
- Information in the report had been presented in percentage form instead of numbers so as to avoid individual cases being identified.

It was emphasised that the Council had a responsibility to assist these young people to achieve their aspirations.

## **9. NORTH WALES GROWTH BID - GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

Submitted - a report by the Leader inviting the Council to approve the scrutiny arrangements for the Growth Bid Joint Committee ("North Wales Economic Ambition Board") to be incorporated in the first stage Governance Agreement.

At the beginning of the discussion, the Leader and the Corporate Director were thanked for their work in this field and for being a strong voice for Gwynedd. It was noted that this was the most important scheme that would be submitted before this Council, and if successful, it would create many jobs for young people in our areas. Therefore, it was important that everyone supported this no matter what the cost would be for this Council.

On the contrary, serious reservations were expressed about the scheme based on a number of financial and political risks. The Westminster and Welsh Governments were happy to bind north Wales with the North West of England although it would be much more sensible and natural for Gwynedd to collaborate with counties in west Wales, and counties such as Wrexham and Flintshire would link with the Northern Powerhouse. There was concern regarding impact on the rural economy and the fact that the scheme would drown Gwynedd economically, culturally and linguistically. Also, there was substantial risk associated with delegating the right for one person to lead the work in Gwynedd, no matter who would hold the post in future. On this basis, members were urged not to support the scheme. In response, the Leader noted that he refused the ideology of withdrawing, building defences and refusing to do anything with anyone else, and that Gwynedd had to be confident and willing to collaborate with every northern county in order to thrive in the modern world.

In response to further observations and questions by the members, the Leader noted:-

- He had reminded the Secretary of State of his recent failures to attract investment to Wales and that the future of the Secretary of State depended on the success of this scheme.

- The question of business rates was not part of the matter in hand, but that he was aware of the concerns and that the private sector was a central part of all discussions.
- He was very aware of the economic problems of rural areas and although the Growth Bid could not be the answer to everything, he, along with other leaders, would voice a strong opinion for projects that would have an impact across the countryside.
- The aim of the Growth Bid and this Council's strategy was to increase the skills of Gwynedd residents rather than the money leaving the area to the major companies.
- Although there was no scheme involved directly with agriculture, the importance of securing input from both agricultural unions to the project was recognised, especially in view of Brexit implications.
- Approving arrangements did not constitute signing any blank cheques. Although he understood that there was an element of cynicism regarding this scheme, in view of the failure of some schemes in the past, this did not mean that we should not take advantage of what was being proposed this time.
- He was not able to make decisions on a number of matters without the approval of the full Council.
- The Growth Bid had led to a political agreement across north Wales.

**RESOLVED to approve the scrutiny arrangements for the Growth Bid Joint Committee ("North Wales Economic Ambition Board") to be incorporated in the first stage Governance Agreement.**

**10. GWYNEDD COUNCIL ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017/18**

Submitted - a report by the Leader which recommended that the Council approved the annual performance report as a balanced, fair and accurate reflection of the Council's performance during 2017/18, and to adopt the report.

The Leader thanked the officers that had been involved with the work.

In response to observations / questions by members, the Leader noted:-

- He would ask the Cabinet Member for Education whether or not the reduction from 64.4% in 2016/17 to 57.4% in 2017/18 in the percentage of 16 year old pupils who achieved the Core Subjects Indicator was a matter of concern for the service.
- The Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture was working hard in the leisure field to create a new arm's-length company and it was greatly hoped that the new arrangements would give the service a new life and direction and attract people back to the leisure centres.
- He was not hopeful that additional funding could be attracted from Welsh Government in recognition of the extra value the innovative work carried out by this Council's staff on the Welsh language, such as the Language Charter, offered to people across Wales. He added that it must also be acknowledged that other councils were undertaking substantial work on the Welsh language and that this Council was willing to offer a helping hand to anyone who wanted help to promote the Welsh language.
- It was recognised that recruiting home carers in the county's rural areas was an increasing problem, and in the long-term, a career structure in the care field must be created where the Council could be proud of the work undertaken. He also referred to the success of collaborating with the Health Service in the field of care for the elderly, and noted that priority was given to the needs of the adult and what they required to be able to continue to live independently.

- Adopting this annual performance report was part of the work to promote the good work undertaken by Council staff. As well as publishing the report in its entirety on the Council website, there was an intention to communicate messages from the report on digital media.
- He intended to have a conversation with the local member regarding a concern expressed by him about a lack of funding to run the Talysarn nursery school building.

**RESOLVED to approve the report as an accurate, balanced and clear reflection of the Council's performance in 2017/18, and to adopt it.**

#### **11. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18**

Submitted - the scrutiny annual report for 2017/18 by the Chair of the Scrutiny Forum, Councillor Beth Lawton. She thanked the scrutiny members who attended scrutiny committee meetings and noted that attendance was very high. She apologised that there were some minor errors in the report and noted that she would ask officers to rectify those errors prior to publishing its final version.

In response to questions / observations by members, the Chair of the Scrutiny Forum noted:-

- She was satisfied that scrutiny work was being heard and that the Scrutiny Forum now had status, with the Chief Executive and key officers attending the meetings. She added that there was still room to improve scrutiny and that the situation would be reviewed over the coming year in order to see how the system worked.
- In the unavoidable absence of two scrutiny chairs from this meeting, that the Scrutiny Forum's wish was for her to submit the annual report on behalf of the four Chairs.
- The Scrutiny Forum could investigate the observation made that the workload of scrutiny committees merited a full day to be assigned for scrutiny committee meetings.

It was enquired who would undertake the independent investigation on health provision in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area, and when. In the absence of the Chair of the Care Scrutiny Committee, the Vice-chair, Councillor Dewi Wyn Roberts (who was also the Vice-chair of the Community Health Council) noted that his understanding was:-

- The Care Scrutiny Committee had invited the Community Health Council (CHC) to hold an independent investigation into the health provision in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area.
- Although the CHC was fully supportive of the people who had raised this matter, they did not have the resources to undertake this type of investigation. Also, the purpose of the CHC was to examine the matters of individuals, and this was something much more.
- Therefore, it appeared that this was a matter for Welsh Government to decide who should undertake the investigation.

During the ensuing discussion, it was noted:-

- The situation was shameful as reasonable people were awaiting a response to their totally reasonable and democratic request, but nobody was taking any notice of them.
- The Care Scrutiny Committee needed to re-address the matter, with the likely intention of referring the matter back to Welsh Government.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Forum was thanked for submitting the report on behalf of the scrutiny chairs.

**12. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2017/18**

Submitted - the Statutory Director of Social Services submitted her annual report offering an overview of the 2017/18 performance and evaluating how Gwynedd Council Social Services had promoted the well-being of people in Gwynedd who needed care and support, along with their carers.

She noted that a positive performance had been seen during the year, and this in the context of higher demand and increasing complexity. Very much had been achieved in the field during the year, and this, to a degree, was a reflection of the good relationship the Council had with its key partners within the field.

She also noted that the Children and Supporting Families Department had recently been the subject of a full inspection of their services by Care Inspectorate Wales, and although the official report had not yet been agreed and published, that verbal feedback from the Chief Inspector at the end of the fieldwork had been very positive and praised the work that was taking place within the Council.

She took advantage of the opportunity to thank all staff, internally and externally, for their tireless and committed work once again this year. In particular, she thanked Marian Parry Hughes (Head of Children and Families Department) and Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department) who had worked closely with her in creating the annual report. She also thanked members of the Care Scrutiny Committee for their work and constructive observations and the Cabinet Members in the care field, Councillors W.Gareth Roberts and Dilwyn Morgan for their support over the year.

In response to questions / observations by members, the Statutory Director of Social Services noted:-

- In terms of staff morale, it was recognised that it was a challenging period for everyone, and although some staff were more confident and found changes in the service easier than others, that they welcomed the fact that managers now entrusted in them. She added that inspectors had noticed that the Council had committed and confident staff and that morale seemed to be high. Also, staff were staying in posts, liked to work through the medium of Welsh and were experienced in their work.
- The Regional Workforce Board was looking at what impact people returning to Gwynedd from the continent would have on the service in light of Brexit, but that there was no easy answer to this problem.
- The excellent provision and support at the Respite Unit, Hafan y Sêr, Penrhyndeudraeth was praised.

**13. THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL BALANCE**

The Head of Democratic Services reported:-

- After receiving a message on the morning of the meeting from Councillor Sion Jones who had noted that he was withdrawing his request to join the Independent Group, the 'Political Balance' report that had been included with the meeting's agenda, needed to be amended.
- In light of a discussion with the Monitoring Officer and the members in question, and also of informing the Leaders of the Political Groups of this latest development, the following recommendation had been submitted, in an attempt

to ensure a practical solution and to maintain a membership as full and consistent as possible on Council committees:-

- (a) The Council was asked to: appoint Councillor Stephen Churchman to the individual seats on the Communities Scrutiny Committee, the Planning Committee and the Pensions Committee.
- (b) The Council was asked to appoint Councillor Sion Jones on the Audit and Governance Committee and the Licensing Committee.

**RESOLVED**

- (a) **To appoint Councillor Stephen Churchman to the individual seats on the Communities Scrutiny Committee, the Planning Committee and the Pensions Committee.**
- (b) **To appoint Councillor Sion Jones on the Audit and Governance Committee and the Licensing Committee.**

**14. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS NOTICES OF MOTION**

Submitted, for information:-

- (a) A letter from Welsh Government, in response to Councillor Elin Walker Jones's notice of motion to the meeting on 8 March 2018, in relation to taxes on plastic.
- (b) Letters from the Westminster and Welsh Governments, in response to Councillor Judith Humphreys's notice of motion to the annual meeting on 3 May, 2018, in relation to Associate EU Citizenship.

**RESOLVED to note the contents of the letters.**

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 3.35pm.

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**CHAIR**