
DWYFOR AREA COMMITTEE 17-12-12

Present: Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Chairman)
Councillor John Brynmor Hughes (Vice-chairman)

Councillors: Aled Evans, Jason Humphreys, Llywarch Bowen Jones, Michael Sol Owen, Angela Ann Russell, Eirwyn Williams, Gruffydd Williams, R.H. Wyn Williams and Robert J. Wright.

Also present: Gareth James (Member Support and Scrutiny Manager) and Ioan Hughes (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Stephen Churchman, Anwen Davies, Gweno Glyn, Simon Glyn, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Peter Read, Liz Saville Roberts, and Owain Williams.

1. CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd as Chairman of the Dwyfor Area Committee for 2012/13.

2. SICKNESS

The Chairman wished a complete and speedy recovery to Councillor Peter Read who had suffered a period of ill-health.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

4. AGENDA

The Chairman expressed concern as only one item had been included on the agenda of the meeting.

Guidance was provided by the Member Support and Scrutiny Manager in which he stated that an informal discussion could be held at the end of the meeting to consider the Committee's work programme

Members referred specifically to flooding problems in Penrhos and it was agreed that the attention of the Head of Service and the appropriate Cabinet Member could be drawn to the matter.

5. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 17 September 2012, as a true record.

6. THE RURAL AGENDA

a) Submitted – the report of the ‘Community Energy Survey’ prepared for Ynni Llŷn by Gritten Management.

b) The Chairman referred to the information provided in the report, noting that as many as 38% of all Gwynedd households suffered from fuel poverty. He noted that this was astounding and perhaps a condemnation of the Council for allowing the situation to reach such a standard.

c) The Member Support and Scrutiny Manager explained that the matter had been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. As a consequence, a request had been made for the opinion of the Area Committees on the intention to include a scrutiny item on what the Council was achieving in this field and how the scrutineers could contribute to the developments.

ch) Members expressed different opinions, noting:-

- residents could be encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to save fuel costs by taking advantage of insulation schemes and similar improvements;
- insulation schemes would not be appropriate for every house and some experts were of the opinion that such schemes caused dampness;
- it was possible to search for more competitive rates in terms of electricity costs;
- efforts to search for different electricity providers could create problems especially for the elderly;
- there was a need to consider the actual costs of various fuels in detail and avoid the danger of seeing the rates of households suffering from fuel poverty increasing;
- advantage should be taken of the opportunity to voice an opinion regarding the Supplementary Planning Guidance on wind turbines which was within the consultation period;
- simple assistance, such as schemes for new windows, could be far less trouble than developments such as solar panels;
- rural areas such as Llŷn faced higher costs than other areas because of fuel transport costs;
- some solar panel and wind turbine schemes were being developed privately and others were community based and there was a need to consider whether there was any difference between them in terms of costs to users;
- focus should not be placed on only certain rural areas;
- steps which could be taken by the Council should be considered for promoting a local body that would operate cooperatively;
- it would be possible to use advertising methods, such as through the Newyddion Gwynedd magazine, to encourage communities to work cooperatively to ensure better fuel purchasing terms;
- a pilot area could be considered with this in view;
- the situation could become worse as a consequence of changes to benefits;

d) The Member Support and Scrutiny Manager explained that the intention of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee was to consider three contrasting areas

within the County, namely, one rural area, one urban area and a third area of a medium nature.

Following initial steps, it was proposed to undertake a scrutiny investigation into the Rural Agenda so that what was involved in being within the three areas could be clearly defined and consideration given to whether the Council's policies reflected this as they were being developed in the Strategic Plan.

RESOLVED to express support to the proposal of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to undertake a Scrutiny Investigation into the Rural Agenda.

The meeting commenced at 5.15pm and concluded at 6.15pm.