

Complete Agenda

CABINET

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

DATE	Tuesday, 21st December, 2021
TIME	1.00 pm
LOCATION	Virtual Meeting - This meeting will be webcast https://gwynedd.public-i.tv/core//en_GB/portal/home
CONTACT POINT	Annes Siôn 01286 679490 / cabinet@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET MEMBERS

Members	
Dyfrig L. Siencyn	Leader
Dafydd Meurig	Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Craig ab Iago	Cabinet Member for Housing
Gareth Wyn Griffith	Cabinet Member for Environment
Nia Wyn Jeffreys	Cabinet Member for Corporate Support
Dilwyn Morgan	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Gareth Thomas	Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Community
Ioan Thomas	Cabinet Member for Finance
Catrin Elen Wager	Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal
Cemlyn Rees Williams	Cabinet Member for Education

AGENDA

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THE CABINET TUESDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2021

Present-

Councillors: Dyfrig L Siencyn, Dafydd Meurig, Craig ab Iago, Gareth Griffith, Nia Jeffreys, Dilwyn Morgan, Ioan Thomas, Gareth Thomas, Catrin Wager and Cemlyn Williams.

Also present-

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department) and Annes Siôn (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 6: Steffan Jones (Head of Highways and Municipal Department)

Item 7: Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Manager), Llywela Owain (Senior Scrutiny and Language Advisor) and Meinir Owen (Senior Projects Practitioner).

Item 8: Aled Gibbard (Senior Operational Manager - Care Resources)

Item 9: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager)

Item 10: Catrin Thomas (Assistant Head of Supporting Families)

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.
No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

A declaration of personal interest was received from Cllr Catrin Wager on item 8, it was stated that it was a prejudicial interest and she left the meeting during the discussion on this item.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 NOVEMBER

The Chair accepted the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021 as a true record.

6. CLEAN AND TIDY COMMUNITIES TEAM

The item was presented by Cllr Catrin Wager

RESOLVED

To approve establishing a Clean and Tidy Communities Team to carry out minor maintenance work and to complement the regular maintenance activities.

An allocation of £1,523,730 was approved from the Transformation Fund to finance the team and its associated costs on a one-off basis for a period of three years to commence as soon as possible.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that street cleanliness had been a regular complaint that Councillors had to deal with. It was explained that this report requested substantial support to improve street cleanliness, noting that residents did not want to see overflowing bins, weeds and litter. It was noted that this was the exact reason why cleanliness had been noted as one of the Council's priorities.

It was expressed that the first step of engaging with areas had been completed and the observations that had been raised across the county were highlighted. It was explained that the department was already undertaking such work but that the service had been cut in order to realise savings over the years. However, between cuts and adaptations to the department as a result of the pandemic, it was explained that it needed to be prioritised.

It was noted that the funding would be used to create five teams to visit an area to undertake maintenance work, and to add the finishing touch by weeding, picking up litter, cleaning and painting. It was explained that these teams would be responsive, reactive and able to face things on a seasonal basis. It was expressed that communication was essential to ensure that Councillors and Community Councils were aware of when the team would be in their area.

It was emphasised that evidence highlighted the importance of this plan, which progressed to investing in improvements for Gwynedd communities.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The report was welcomed, noting that street cleanliness was the matter that was mostly raised with Councillors.
- Support was expressed noting that people would show more respect to communities, as residents and tourists, if communities were clean and tidy.
- It was noted that residents and the public also had a responsibility to keep their communities tidy, but there was also a need to ensure communication with Town Councils.
- The need to have the cooperation of communities was also noted and to undertake preparation work in advance.

To approve an allocation of £1,523,730 from the Transformation Fund to provide the necessary budget and its associated costs on a one-off basis for a period of three years to commence as soon as possible.

7. HUNANIAITH BUSINESS CASE

The item was presented by Cllr Nia Jeffreys

RESOLVED

To approve a commitment of £203,880 from the Transformation Fund to fund an additional post for a four-year period to manage the service and improve Hunaniaith's position as a unit within the Council for the time being, to focus on attracting new grants and raising an income, improve community contact, attract more community members to the Strategic Group and work towards being an independent entity.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that it was a technical report that laid the foundations of a business case to realise an aspiration and vision for Hunaniaith to become an independent body in future. The importance of using the Welsh language as a community language was highlighted.

It was explained that creating this business case was a step forward in the journey, and by appointing a Chief Officer to lead this work it would be an opportunity to attract grants and to establish the body as an independent entity. Officers were thanked for their work to try to realise the vision.

The Head of Corporate Support Department noted that the report was recognition of work that had been undertaken following the Cabinet's decision and that it was a practical method to establish Hunaniaith as an independent entity allowing time to secure fixed long-term funding sources.

The Senior Scrutiny and Language Advisor explained that the Chair of Hunaniaith was supportive of the report and continued to believe that Hunaniaith would be better as an independent entity but the work had to be undertaken on a step-by-step basis and that this decision was part of the journey.

The Senior Projects Practitioner added that there was currently no certainty of grants as an independent entity and, therefore, as a result it was a better idea to have a Chief Officer to develop and to secure grant stability.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Support was noted to the report emphasising that it was an opportunity for Hunaniaith to undertake preparatory work and to pave the way forward by seeking grants to achieve this vision. It was expressed that it should not be grant-led.
- It was noted that Gwynedd's robustness was its language and it was explained that this was why Hunaniaith was possibly not a separate entity. However, it was emphasised that the language was under threat here in Gwynedd as in the whole of Wales and, therefore, appointing a Chief Officer would lead the work and ensure that more work was undertaken in communities.

8. AUTISM PLAN 2021-23

The report was submitted by Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

RESOLVED

The Autism Plan 2021-23 was approved.

It was agreed to prejudge the annual bids process and approve a bid for £48,000 from the permanent revenue budget now, in order to fund the post of Autism Co-ordinator and two Social Work posts at an annual cost of £144,000 with the Council contributing a third of the cost.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that this Autism Plan was one of the Council Plan projects and it was one of the department's improvement plans. It was noted that this was a partnership project between the Council, the Health Service and the Isle of Anglesey County Council. Despite the challenges that had faced the three partners during the pandemic, it was emphasised that submitting this report showed its importance.

It was expressed that it had been a long journey although it would never end as it was a live strategy that would constantly respond and adapt. It was noted that the Plan had been submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee that was very supportive and had committed to provide an input to the regular review.

The Senior Operational Manager added that this plan was a priority and it was recognised that the work had been influenced by a complaint made about the department that was forwarded to the Ombudsman. It was explained that the department had appointed an external consultant to examine the reports by the Ombudsman and to examine the work and this input had been key to develop the plan. Attention was drawn to the Code of Conduct introduced in September noting that the plan corresponded to this Code of Conduct.

It was emphasised that this plan was the beginning of the journey and it would be an opportunity to identify gaps and to move on more robustly. It was noted that difficult portfolio work would need to be undertaken as information was kept across the partnership. It was explained that an Autism Board would be created in order to review the work for the future.

It was explained that operations were based on three specific steps, namely establishing the Board, to appointing more staff in order to assess earlier and offer training across services, and to nurture a relationship with Autism Services on a regional and national basis to review the work in future. It was emphasised that this document was the beginning of the journey and it would continue to develop.

Observations arising from the discussion

- The report was welcomed highlighting that this plan was cross-departmental with close collaboration with the Education department

9. CHANGE APPROVAL ARRANGEMENTS OF UP TO £100,000 FROM RESERVES

The report was submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas

DECISION

In order to facilitate more flexible spending arrangements, it was decided to delegate power to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Head of Finance Department, to commit sums of up to £100,000 from the Transformation Fund and/or the Covid-19 Recovery Arrangements Fund.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the Transformation Fund was used to fund the Council's priorities, which had been included in the Council Plan. It was explained that the fund supported transformational and one-off work.

Back in 2013, in the face of a challenging financial period, it was stated that it had been decided to change the expenditure approval regime from the Transformation Fund, with all claims from the Fund receiving Cabinet approval. After considering the size of the fund, it was now suggested that a revised procedure should be established, because of the need to move forward to achieve priorities without delay, whilst addressing immediate spending needs.

Over £4 million had been earmarked in the Transformation Fund during 2021/22, which meant that the fund balance was £12.5 million on 31 March 2021. As a result of Covid-19, it was explained that a Recovery Arrangements Fund had been established when accounts were closed, and £2.5 million had been earmarked for the fund to assist the Council to recover after the crisis.

It was explained that regular expenditure had been made annually from the Transformation Fund in accordance with Council priorities. Between 2016/17 and 2020/21, it was noted that expenditure was over £7 million. It was stated that current commitments against the Transformation Fund were valued at £5.4 million, which included commitments of over £5 million before the 2021/22 financial year. This meant that £7.2 million of resources were available for the purpose of Council Plan priorities.

In terms of the Covid-19 Recovery Arrangements Fund, it was noted that there were commitments of £430,000, which included £130,000 to upgrade technology to enable remote meetings. It was emphasised that the Cabinet's approval would still be required for priorities above the threshold of £100,000.

10. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SUPPORT

The report was submitted by Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the department was holding positive monthly performance challenge meetings that were constantly evolving. Concerns were highlighted about the department's capacity to be able to input information on a monthly basis but it was explained that the next step would be for managers to take ownership of the monthly reports. Members of the Care Scrutiny Committee who attended the performance challenge meetings were also thanked.

It was noted that the department's priority plans that were seen in the Council Plan continued to progress, and the Strategy for Keeping Families Together was highlighted. However, it was stressed that staffing challenges were seen across the department and had been highlighted in the risk register. In order to address the challenge, it was noted that work was ongoing in collaboration with the Corporate Support department.

It was explained that the element regarding the Autism Strategy was not easy reading but the plan had progressed after writing the report and it had now been discussed at this meeting. Although the workforce capacity was one of the main concerns of the department, it was stated, on the whole, that the department was performing very well.

Despite the staffing challenges, the Assistant Head added that the department had still managed to support and safeguard children ensuring that they could stay at home with their families when possible.

The Corporate Director noted that there was concern about the field particularly in terms of pressures on staff. The staff were thanked for their hard work and for their ability to continue to operate during this difficult period. It was highlighted that staff were performing well despite being under constant pressure. The good relationship between the department and Bangor University and the MA Course in Social Services was highlighted, explaining that this collaboration would continue to ensure that the Council attracted a good number of social workers.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- The department was congratulated for its work to ensure service level but it was enquired how long it would be possible for the department to continue with a shortage of staff. It was noted that there was no easy answer but over the years the Council had done very well in recruiting into the field. Nevertheless, it was stated that many staff members felt that the post was increasingly challenging and there was a need to ensure that staff were not placed under too much pressure. It was explained that there was a national need for the sector to have better profile and recognition for the work they undertake.
- The staff were thanked for their work, not only for the work delivered but

also for a legible and coherent performance report.

11. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The report was submitted by Cllr Dafydd Meurig

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, drawing particular attention to the schemes seen in the Council's Plan. In terms of a suitable and sustainable care provision plan for the future, it was noted that they were satisfied with the work undertaken although there had been a slippage in opening some specific resources such as the dementia unit in Llan Ffestiniog. It was explained that challenges had been faced in Dolgellau in terms of obtaining suitable land for development. However, it was noted that the journey continued and it was stated that a bid would be submitted to obtain additional staff to monitor care homes across the county to ensure quality and sufficient support for providers.

It was explained that the work of re-designing the care service was slightly behind as a result of Covid-19. It was noted that the department hoped to re-tender in January with the hope of obtaining new contracts with providers by the summer.

In terms of the Workforce and Recruitment plan, it was emphasised that it was difficult to tackle. Although the performance table was displayed in green, it was explained that this was not the full picture. It was noted that the recruitment campaign was ongoing and there was a need to re-examine how to recruit people locally, as staff shortages had led to individuals remaining in hospital as no care was available.

In terms of performance, it was noted that the department had not managed to reach a situation where it was possible to hold monthly meetings, and financial challenges were highlighted in terms of finding savings.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Gratitude was expressed for the report and for drawing attention to the element of staff recruitment. It was explained that the situation could be seen across the county and the need to examine the matter was emphasised.
- It was explained that work was underway to review the savings plans across all departments as several found it challenging to achieve them. It was noted that there was a need to examine all plans and examine how to achieve them or seek alternative plans.
- The carers were thanked for their work and it was noted that the Welsh and UK Governments needed to ensure a budget so that it would be possible to pay carers fairly for their work, which made a difference to

individuals' lives.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.40 pm

CHAIRMAN

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to a meeting of the Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting:	21 December 2021
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Dafydd Meurig, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being (Chair of the Supporting People Board)
Contact Officer:	Morwena Edwards, Corporate Director Catrin Thomas, Assistant Head (Children and Supporting Families Department)
Contact Details:	awenmorwenaedwards@gwynedd.llyw.cymru catrinthomas@gwynedd.llyw.cymru
Title of Item:	The Supporting People Programme

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1 Cabinet members are requested to approve one-off resources for two years, which are £193,217 in 2022/23 and £155,990 in 2023/24 from the Covid Recovery Fund towards the Supporting People Programme.
- 1.2 We have already diverted and identified resources for this year (2021/22) via service budgets across the Council and by maximising our existing grants.

2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

- 2.1 The supporting people field is currently changing rapidly due to socio-economic instability as a consequence of the Covid crisis. We are seeing that more people from Gwynedd need our support to protect them from poverty and its impacts on their lives.
- 2.2 We have responded to the needs of our residents in the best way we can within our current resources; however, we need a long-term investment to maintain this and ensure that we can continue to respond to this variable agenda.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The 'Supporting People's Wellbeing' Programme looks at our arrangements and provisions to support vulnerable people to cope with the challenges of life so that they can thrive, be safe and healthy.

- 3.2 The programme contributes to the delivery of our corporate priority to reduce inequalities and tackle poverty in the county, as noted in the Council's Plan.
- 3.3 We have reviewed the programme's scope since the pandemic in order to ensure that we respond to what is important to our residents in the current period, and to respond to the change in the challenges our residents currently face.
- 3.4 Therefore, this year we are focusing our efforts on supporting residents who are:
- a) facing homelessness;
 - b) unpaid carers to their loved ones;
 - c) facing poverty;
 - d) digitally excluded.
- 3.5 We will also focus our efforts on working across services and with our partners on interventions to promote wellbeing for children, young people and people of all ages; and how we can support the resilience of communities.
- 3.6 We will continue to look at models and our ways of working to ensure that residents obtain access to the broad range of support available across our services, in order that they receive support in a timely, coordinated way and locally within communities.
- 3.7 Task and Finish Groups are driving this important agenda forward with action plans for these specific fields across our departments. However, in reviewing the programme's scope we have identified gaps in our arrangements, capacity and provisions to realise what is required, to address people's needs to support our residents.

4. THE RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 4.1 The Council and its partners have been actively supporting people, particularly the groups noted in 3.4 above, since before the pandemic. We adapted our services and provisions, as well as establishing new ones throughout the Covid crisis, to ensure that we give the support needed to our residents.
- 4.2 An Emergency Community Resilience Group was established to bring Council departments, the Health Board, CAB, Adra, Cynefin and Mantell Gwynedd together to support people to cope with the challenges of the pandemic. The Group developed provisions during the crisis to respond to residents' needs as they arose such as a Covid Helpline, Programme to Support Residents who were Shielding, Grants for Community Covid Groups, a volunteers recruitment and deployment programme, befriending and keeping in touch programmes, emergency food provision. Several of these provisions have now ended, as the

need has been satisfied, or they have continued through our day-to-day work and that of our partners.

- 4.3 Over the last 12 months we have also modified and recovered a number of the programmes that address supporting people who are facing poverty, such as Sure Start, 30 hours Childcare Offer, housing benefit, discretionary housing payments, council tax reduction provision, free school breakfast and lunch, pupils' learning grant and other grants to schools, employability programmes such as Communities for Work and the Young People's Engagement and Development Framework, and fuel poverty programmes such as Warm Wales.
- 4.4 Likewise, several other provisions that were operated in Gwynedd by local and national partners have re-commenced.
- 4.5 These programmes have been recovered to a very different socio-economic context. The work referred to in this report deals mainly with mitigating the short-term impacts of poverty - as the crisis has had an affect on people's normal circumstances and as we have seen an increase in the cost of living during the same period. We will continue to work through our economic development plans, work and employability, education, health and housing to prevent and tackle long-term poverty.
- 4.6 There is a close connection here with the Council's efforts to support the people of Gwynedd to play a full part in the world of work through Gwaith Gwynedd's team within the Economy and Community Department. We continue to invest in strategic plans that involve ensuring that the local economy offers employment opportunities that satisfy the needs of our residents.
- 4.7 We continue to see an increase in the number of residents who seek support to assist them to maintain a tenancy and to prevent homelessness. Although there are several different reasons why residents face homelessness, financial issues, due to arrears, unable to pay rent, lack of income and increasing costs, is one of those reasons. We need to ensure that the various programmes available in the county interweave with the Housing Support Grant, and assist us to deliver the Housing Action Plan and prevent people from becoming homeless due to poverty.
- 4.8 Similarly, we are already aware which groups of people are most likely to suffer poverty, and which groups have been disproportionately affected by the crisis. Children, families with caring responsibilities, low income families, disabled people, people of ethnic minorities, women, unemployed single young people, low income households at risk of losing a home, are all groups of people who are at risk of suffering from poverty or are currently suffering poverty.
- 4.9 In doing this, it will assist us to ensure that when we make decisions, we will give due attention to the need to reduce the inequalities of the outcomes that derive from socio-economic disadvantage.

- 4.10 The Council and our partners continue to seek cooperation to respond to the gaps in our current provisions relating to food affordability; maximising income, claiming benefit and financial advice; and digital inclusion.
- 4.11 We have already maximised the Hardship Fund, Recovery Fund and various Preventative Grants to support our work in these areas.
- 4.12 We need a better understanding of the poverty pattern in Gwynedd and the provisions in response that are in place. By strengthening our understanding, and our cooperation arrangements with our partners, we can divert programmes to the right places, and plan jointly to address gaps to ensure the correct support for the people of Gwynedd.

Food Poverty

- 4.13 The Council has supported the food banks with food supplies, together with capital and revenue grants towards running costs; over the last 12 months we have also drawn resources from several national grants to support 20 Community Food Schemes throughout the county. The Schemes involve growing and providing food and meals, reducing food waste and developing cooking skills.
- 4.14 The Banks and Community Schemes continue to be operational throughout the county with many reporting an increase in the number of residents who contact them for food support. We have recently contacted all the schemes to identify their needs over the coming winter. We will maximise the Social Care Recovery Fund, the Children and Communities Grant, the Hardship Fund and the Brexit Grant to support these efforts and to support the plans to address the needs of our residents.
- 4.15 A number of the food schemes have stated their wish to be part of a county network to be able to share resources, support each other and look at opportunities for collaboration. A number of the schemes have stated their wish to work more closely with some of the Council's services to refer residents that come to them to the support they need, especially housing, mental health, care, benefits and income, work, debts, substance misuse.
- 4.16 We need to ensure that we have the capacity to support the network of food schemes to enable them to continue to support vulnerable residents in our communities.

Maximising Income, Benefits and Financial Advice

- 4.17 A number of households that have never used the benefits system before, or food banks or any other source of support, are now trying to navigate their way through these for the first time.

- 4.18 We also know that changes in the Welfare System continue to be challenging for a number of residents, and the latest change to Universal Credit has had an impact on 9,800 households in Gwynedd, with over half of these being households with children.
- 4.19 There is historical under-claiming with the Pension Credit benefit. Claiming this by eligible persons could avoid poverty, promote older people to continue to live independently in their own homes and reduce the demand on Adults Care Services.
- 4.20 The Council has collaborated on 'Claim what's yours' campaigns, and campaigns to raise awareness of local Financial Advice Services jointly with CAB and the Council's Benefits Service.
- 4.21 Several **financial and debts advice services** continue to work virtually and this is a barrier for many without digital ability/connectivity. The recovery of centres and face-to-face work is underway, but not at the speed to address the demand. We support CAB and resources have been identified via the Social Recovery Grant to assist the advice service to recover more quickly.
- 4.22 We need to ensure that these residents claim the financial support available to them through various benefits. We need to ensure that Gwynedd residents know what is available to them, how to claim and support and guide them through these services.

Fuel Poverty

- 4.23 Fuel costs to keep homes warm have increased significantly, and this has an impact on the income of Gwynedd residents, pushing many families into poverty or further into poverty.
- 4.24 The Council is working with the Welsh Government on how we improve housing conditions so that we can impose the low carbon measures that will, in turn, lead to a reduction in fuel poverty. We are working with the private sector on an Eco scheme to expand the number of houses that receive support measures. We are also looking at expanding the scheme to cover entire areas in light of Arbed am Byth. The Council's partners include Nest, Warm Wales, and community groups such as Twrog Energy and Y Dref Werdd to develop low carbon schemes in order to respond to the fuel poverty challenge.
- 4.25 The ECO Scheme, Energy Wardens (led by Adra on behalf of the Housing Partnership), several community groups and CAB support residents with advice on suppliers, switching suppliers and tariff, managing debts to suppliers and improving the skills of residents on current energy use. We are setting up a Housing Helpdesk as part of the current Housing Action Plan, and Gwynedd

residents will be able to gain access to support and solutions to their fuel poverty issues there.

- 4.26 Welsh Government has announced the Winter Fuel Support Scheme for low income households of working age. We will be administering the payments through the Benefits Service.
- 4.27 We need to ensure that arrangements are in place to maximise these programmes to help us to deliver the Housing Action Plan, together with ensuring that these provisions are linked to broader tackling poverty programmes.

Digital Inclusion

- 4.28 The crisis has forced residents and services to use and depend on virtual and online contact. The previous work of Digital Gwynedd identified groups of residents that are digitally excluded, and the circumstances of the pandemic has led to the exclusion of more people.
- 4.29 The Council, the Health Board, Adults and Community Education Partnership, volunteer partners and community groups have all sought to respond to this challenge during the crisis via various schemes involving learning digital skills; learning how to use devices; borrowing equipment and devices; digital advice for residents; recycling and renewing equipment for low income households etc.
- 4.30 Through the Digital Inclusion Framework, the Welsh Government provides the Digital Communities Wales programme that is operational here.
- 4.31 These provisions do not involve the provision of broadband infrastructure, provision of public services or the skills and education agenda. These areas receive separate attention via other policy areas namely Economy, Education etc.
- 4.32 We want to collaborate with our partners to ensure that groups that are digitally excluded can take advantage of the available provisions.
- 4.33 The Council had worked for a few years with the national charity Citizens Online as part of a scheme by the Big Lottery Fund to provide and co-ordinate support to reduce digital exclusion. A successful bid was submitted for nearly £155,000 by Citizens Online to restore their activities in the county through the Council to the UK Government's Community Regeneration Fund. This scheme will be operational until June 2022.

5. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 5.1 Appointment of an Inclusion Coordinator and Inclusion Support Officer. Through this investment, we will achieve the following:
- Establish a Tackling Poverty Action Plan jointly with our partners
 - Establish a food poverty network in the county

- Resume our planning and collaboration arrangements across partners such as the Financial Inclusion Group, Welfare Group and the Digital Inclusion Group
- Local campaigns to promote benefits, specifically to target low income households, and families via schools
- Expand the local support for residents to apply for benefits and gain access to financial support
- Support residents with emergency food provision and financial support

5.2 Financial profile:

	2022/23	2023/24
Inclusion and Poverty Coordinator	47,241	47,950
Support Officer	36,488	37040.
Benefits Promoters	55,000	55,000
Schools' Benefits Promoter	36,488	
Operational Costs	18,000	16,000
TOTAL	193,217	155,990

6. VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

i) Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

ii) Statutory Finance Officer:

I can confirm the accuracy of the financial figures that appear in paragraph 5.2. I have no objections to the decision sought.

Agenda Item 7

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	21 December 2021
Title:	Establishing the North Wales Region's Corporate Joint Committee (CJC)
Purpose:	Further to Welsh Government legislation establishing the North Wales region's CJC, the 6 local authorities must make appropriate arrangements before holding the CJC's first meeting, and agree the CJC's 2022/23 budget by 31 January 2022, before initial CJC functions 'go live' on 30 June 2022.
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn
Contact Officers:	Dafydd Gibbard – Chief Executive, Iwan G D Evans – Monitoring Officer and Dafydd L Edwards – Head of Finance.

Decision Sought –

Agree in principle that the functions of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board be transferred by way of a delegation agreement to the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee on condition;

- a) that the statutory framework that the Welsh Government are developing allows for the delegation of the relevant executive functions to a Corporate Joint Committee,
- b) that **the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee agrees to establishment of a Sub-Committee**, with membership to be agreed with the Councils, **to undertake the functions of the Economic Ambition Board.**

This transition is proposed in order to achieve a streamlined governance model, avoiding duplication. A further detailed report on the framework for implementation will be presented to a subsequent meeting of the Cabinet / Executive.

Background

1. Regulations were made by the Welsh Government on 17 March 2021 creating four Corporate Joint Committees in Wales, and the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) was established on 1 April 2021.
2. The four CJs will exercise functions relating to strategic development planning and regional transport planning. They will also be able to do things to promote the economic well-being. In contrast to other joint committee arrangements, the CJC is a separate corporate body which can employ staff and hold assets.
3. Our region's the CJC is already in existence as an independent corporate body, and its initial functions will come into force on 30 June 2022 ('go live' date for the North Wales CJC). In the past, reservations were expressed because CJs might lead to "another layer of bureaucracy", but now we have no choice other than to make it work.

4. Further regulations will follow. The Welsh Government are consulting on draft statutory guidance. Pinsent Masons LLP, who are advising several Welsh regions, are liaising with Welsh Government in the development of this detail. This report's focus is on regional implementation and transition - the establishment of the North Wales CJC.
5. Welsh Government grant funding of £250,000 has been approved, to enhance project management capacity and commission professional assistance (including legal advice) to support implementation of, and transition to the region's CJC during 2021/22.
6. Establishing the CJC is a legal requirement, but the timetable remains challenging, including the 'immediate duties' prescribed in the legislation (viz. regional Strategic Development Plan, Regional Transport Plan, and the economic well-being function), the need to balance legacy issues with new statutory requirements, the scheduling of initial meetings, and budget-setting in January 2022.
7. This report is submitted simultaneously to Cabinet (or similar Executive Committee) meetings at the 6 Councils: Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd and Wrexham.

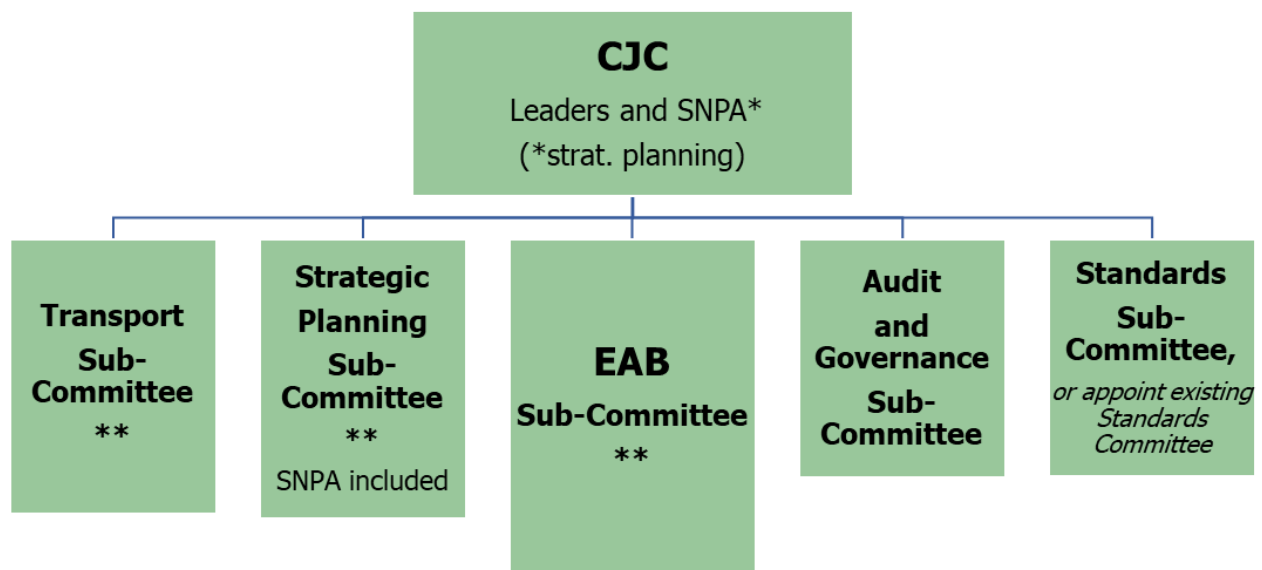
Principles

8. There is a consensus that the CJC should continue in the direction established by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (EAB), albeit possibly better supported in due course by the structures, powers and levers provided by the CJC legislation. Further, the 6 Council Leaders and Chief Executives are agreed that our CJC should be 'built' on the following aims and principles:
 - i. Clarity / simplicity
 - ii. Avoiding new bureaucracy and excessive cost
 - iii. Adding value to, not disrupting, existing regional governance
 - iv. Major Growth Deal decisions being protected by the 'reserved matters' rule
 - v. Subsidiarity (individual LAs make decisions on issues that affect them)
 - vi. Allowing new powers and opportunities to be devolved to the region
 - vii. Being 'future proof'
9. Faced with the challenging timescale, there is cross-border agreement that we should initially aim to establish a streamlined governance model, avoiding duplication while having due regard to subsidiarity. The first priority is to move the EAB to an empowered sub-committee of the CJC, noting that our local authority Leaders will be in control of this corporate body. Given approval to establish this governance model, we would ensure that we keep our options open with a high degree of flexibility to subsequently consider transition details (e.g. staff issues) on a 'case by case' basis.

Structure for the EAB in the CJC

10. Pinsent Masons have considered operational structures available to the EAB going forward, in light of the establishment of the CJC, Welsh Government policy direction and the regionally agreed principles noted under paragraph 5 above.

11. Doing nothing, or 'co-existence' is insufficient, contrary to Welsh Government policy, and doesn't address how the Economic Ambition Board's functions are to be discharged by the CJC.
12. At first glance, a partial transfer to a 'hybrid' model retaining a host authority as accountable body, co-existing with the CJC, may appear to be attractive in terms of avoiding change from the current Economic Ambition Board model (despite the benefits of a CJC). However, this would require convoluted back-to-back agreements in respect of transactions entered into by project sponsors on behalf of the EAB. It lacks clarity, and provides no real advantage. Further, our region would still require a functioning CJC to undertake the Transport and Planning roles, which are vested directly in the CJC.
13. The most efficient and viable operational structure, which satisfies the requirement to transition to a CJC, is to transfer the Economic Ambition Board functions to an empowered sub-committee of the CJC. Consequently, transferring the functions to a sub-committee will retain core elements of the EAB, but provide a more robust and efficient delivery model directly via the CJC corporate vehicle. Crucially, the framework should allow a sub-committee governance model agreed with the CJC to confirm / continue the role of the Councils and Partners in relation to the "Reserved Matters".
14. Pinsent Masons have advised officers in detail on the advantages and some key issues, before we concluded that the transferring the EAB functions to a sub-committee provides the optimal structure for the CJC. As a separate corporate body, the CJC may naturally evolve over time and deliver wider initiatives, while building upon recent years of regional public investment under the EAB and continuing the trajectory established by Growth Deal.
15. The proposed CJC committee structure is shown in the following chart, including establishment of a subsidiary EAB delivery vehicle (sub-committee). This limits the extent of change and satisfies the 'immediate duties' in a consensual way –



** Delegation to statutory sub-committees, which are also subject to the transparency requirements which apply to executive function bodies.

Decision-Making

16. Pinsent Masons advise that decision-making, after transferring functions under the CJC, could operate to a large degree how decision-making currently occurs within the Economic Ambition Board, with local authorities retaining overall control over Growth Deal decision-making through robust delegation or novation arrangements. This will require amending legislation to allow for executive or Cabinet functions to be delegated to the CJC, as they are currently delegated to the EAB. It is understood from Pinsent Masons, further to their discussions with the Welsh Government, that this will be addressed in the forthcoming set of regulations.
17. The scheme of delegation from the local authorities to the CJC will clarify which matters remain decisions that are reserved for the local authorities as is currently set out in 'GA2'.
18. Snowdonia National Park Authority is an additional voting member of the CJC, but only on matters relating to the strategic planning function and its budget.
19. The 'Advisors' (college principals) are not original CJC members, but can be co-opted to the subcommittee and may be given voting rights if CJC so determines (and, if so, the current EAB model would continue).

Merits of transferring the Economic Ambition Board functions into the CJC forming a single corporate entity

20. Having considered the approach to and implications of transferring the north Wales region's EAB and current Growth Deal arrangements (and where applicable, Growth Vision delivery) into the CJC, legal advice received from Pinsent Masons shows that simplicity and avoiding bureaucracy (two key principles identified under paragraph 5 above) may be achieved by fully utilising the potential of the CJC via direct contractual arrangements.
21. This view is strongly supported by the Cardiff Capital Region's experience, analysis and decision to 'lift and shift' their city deal (growth deal) operations to their CJC, forming a single corporate entity. Cardiff's 'go live' date for commencement of functions is 28 February 2022, four months before our CJC's 'go live' date, allowing us to be informed by precedents there.
22. Transferring the Economic Ambition Board functions to a single corporate entity will mean not using a host authority as the accountable body. However, individual local authorities could continue to provide officers and support services to the CJC / EAB by agreement, or individual local authorities could agree to 'lead' on one of the specific 'immediate duties'. Also, individual partners could continue to lead on individual projects, of course.
23. The north Wales region's CJC must appoint statutory officers, i.e. a Chief Executive, a Monitoring Officer, and a Chief Finance Officer (CJCs have the same financial reporting and disclosure requirements as local authorities). However, the CJC could choose either to employ these directly, or enter into arrangements with constituent authorities for their officers to be placed at the disposal of the CJC.

24. Staff directly employed by the CJC may be minimised. Before the 30 June 2022 'go live' date, we will need to carefully consider transfer of Economic Ambition Board staff to be employed by the CJC, rather than the host authority. At the outset, any other employment shift could be limited by use of service level agreements with local authorities for services, or secondment of staff from local authorities. Subsequently, the CJC may make 'delivery' decisions with each individual function.

Added value for the EAB within the CJC as a single corporate entity

25. Using a host authority as the accountable body has been successful in establishing the EAB. However, continuing with this contractual agency / services agreement approach ("co-existing" with the CJC henceforth) would eventually mean both the EAB and the host authority being mired in "back to back agreements" which will be required on individual projects.
26. Over circa 6 years, this has put increasing strain on Cardiff Council as the accountable body for their region's city deal. As we have grant funding to support such transition now, Gwynedd and north Wales should take cognizance of our opportunity to take the benefit of Cardiff's experiences now, in order to avoid the time and cost of changing later. We have a timely opportunity now to learn from the Capital Region's experience. Many more loan and contract agreements would need to be novated or retained by the accountable body (depending on the nature and complexity of the individual projects) if north Wales switched our EAB model to a corporate entity further on down the road.

Sub-committees for Strategic Planning and Strategic Transport

27. There is clear consensus (from recent discussions between the 6 Council Leaders and Chief Executives) that we need a governance structure with sub-committees for Strategic Planning and Strategic Transport, both being sub-committees of the CJC alongside, and not underneath, the EAB as a sub-committee in its own right.
28. These sub-committees could be inclusive of relevant cabinet members from the constituent authorities, alongside their leaders on the CJC. The CJC could appoint other members with voting rights from partner organisations, as required. This delegated governance model could enable us to have a lighter CJC meeting agenda, with sub-committees doing the heavy lifting. There are certain matters which cannot be delegated by the CJC in this context, particularly around governance structure, budget decisions, and certain key decisions in relation to the adoption of the statutory plans.
29. It has been suggested that there should be 'host authority' for strategic planning and a 'host authority' for strategic transport. There could be seconding-in of some existing capacity to do the strategic work on the 'immediate duties' which must be delivered for the CJC. While individual local authorities could be prepared to lead on planning or transport functions, they would not be an 'accountable body' as Gwynedd are for the EAB. The CJC, as a corporate entity, would make agreements with third parties as required. However, in principle, it may be practical for individual authorities to lead and deliver the planning and transport functions, with the CJC funding these authorities' increased capacity / regional responsibility.

Transition from Growth Deal Arrangements

30. Several regulatory issues remain to be resolved with regards transition from current arrangements to the CJC – some of these need to be addressed through expected CJC regulations, etc. Clarification required includes possible novation of the Growth Deal funding agreement to the CJC (alternatively, subject to legislative changes to reflect Welsh Government’s direction of travel, local authorities could delegate or novate to the CJC). Clarification is also required regarding the scope of the CJC’s ability to borrow, invest and act commercially, tax and VAT status. The Welsh Government have stated that their policy intention is that CJCs should be subject to the same powers and duties as principal LAs in the way that they operate (including essentially the ability to borrow and reclaim VAT like unitary local authorities). Solutions to some issues are still a ‘work in progress’.
31. Legal advice is being received from Pinsent Masons on the approach to and implications of transferring the north Wales region’s EAB and current Growth Deal arrangements into the CJC. Initial legal advice and the challenging timescales means that the Welsh Government’s aim to transfer these arrangements into the CJC is more challenging and complex than anticipated. We will also need to consider the governance of our region’s CJC and potential sub-committees, which will require specialist input from the local authorities’ lawyers.
32. The Welsh Government’s stated policy direction is that the CJC should be afforded the requisite powers to be able to deliver the Growth Deal for the local authorities. Accordingly, following review of the current legislation and discussion with the Welsh Government, Pinsent Masons’ specialist lawyers conclude that there is not intended to be a material disparity in the manner in which the NWEAB currently operates and how the CJC could operate in respect of the Growth Deal / Growth Vision. It is anticipated that complexities regarding delegation to the CJC may be solved by further Regulations, allowing us to tailor operations to reflect the needs of the region, in line with the Economic Ambition Board and ‘GA2’.

Governance and Finance

33. Transition of the Economic Ambition Board (with no material change to how it currently operates) to the CJC would require a formal decision by each of the local authorities, and in practice the consent of the other partners to GA2. The Welsh Government’s Corporate Joint Committees General Regulations have not yet addressed the issue of the role of scrutiny committees. The current scrutiny arrangements for the Economic Ambition Board are within the statutory framework for scrutinising executive decision making. GA2 includes a protocol for managing the relationship. Thus far, there is no statutory arrangement for scrutiny of the Corporate Joint Committees. However, the draft statutory guidance on CJCs emphasises the role of local authorities’ overview and scrutiny arrangements, as part of the governance and democratic accountability framework which needs to be established. There are further regulations to follow and we will need to develop a scrutiny framework and understand the basis for the arrangements.

34. In respect of the 'initial functions' (see below), the CJC will need to agree the budget and allocate contributions across the local authorities. Each local authority's representative on the CJC will be mindful of the guiding principles under the NWEAB's GA2 but, as the budget setting relates to the 'initial functions', the budget contributions will be determined and levied by the CJC itself.
35. There will be significant ongoing resource requirements on local authorities' capacity in administering and delivering CJC functions. These administrative burdens and professional resource requirements for the establishment of and servicing of the CJC are yet to be fully identified.
36. As part of the scheme of delegation to the CJC, the local authorities will be passporting the Growth Deal funding, which will be allocated and invested in strict accordance with the terms of the 'Outline Business Plan' (which was adopted when 'GA2' was signed). Any change impacting on the financial position of a local authority may be reserved for the local authorities to determine (rather than the CJC), thus ensuring this aspect operates as per the EAB.
37. Some additional statutory obligations are broadly in keeping with how the EAB functions, including:
 - the CJC to prepare a 12-month business plan setting out activities to be undertaken and the CJC's budget requirements;
 - the CJC to agree the CJC's budget requirements for its first financial year at a meeting of the CJC by 31 January 2022, and how this will be met (levied);
 - the CJC to appoint the chairperson and vice-chairperson at its first meeting; and
 - the CJC to establish a Governance and Audit Sub-Committee.

The 'Initial Functions'

38. There are three initial functions prescribed to be discharged by the CJC, two are which are not currently carried out by the NWEAB:
 - preparing, monitoring, reviewing and revising of a Strategic Development Plan;
 - developing a Regional Transport Plan – policies for transport; and
 - economic well-being function – anything likely to promote economic wellbeing.
39. Planning policy managers in north Wales have looked at delivery options and cost implications for producing the north Wales region's Strategic Development Plan (SDP) (in addition to Local Development Plans).
40. Transport professionals are currently considering how a compliant and suitably robust Regional Transport Plan (RTP) could be developed.

41. Both the Councils and the CJC have concurrent powers in relation to promoting economic wellbeing - this one of the powers, amongst many, that the parties currently rely upon to deliver the Growth Deal. In due course additionality in the co delivery of this function may be considered based on the currently envisaged Growth Vision role of the Economic Ambition Board.
42. The regionally agreed principles noted under paragraph 5 above are consistent with a shared view that the proposals here are made on a 'no threat' basis to the local authorities. Thus, the CJC will set the direction and priorities, and is likely to need some concurrent functions, while its SDP and RTP will set a policy framework which the local authorities must have regard to. However, the individual local authorities will remain best placed to undertake local activity around economic development, planning, transport and other functions, with the CJC empowering and supporting local, regional and national delivery.

Recommendation

43. The Cabinet / Executive are asked, subject to the Welsh Government putting the appropriate statutory framework in place, to adopt a streamlined governance model, avoiding duplication, by approving in principle the transition of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to be established as a sub-committee of the north Wales region's Corporate Joint Committee (CJC).

Next Steps

44. The following key tasks (this is not an exhaustive list) will require attention during late 2021, or during first quarter of 2022:
 - i. Regarding CJC membership, Snowdonia National Park Authority to nominate their representative.
 - ii. Set the date of the first CJC meeting.
 - iii. Agree the CJC's budget requirements for its first financial year at a meeting of the CJC by 31 January 2022
 - iv. Agree how the CJC's budget requirements will be met, i.e. authorities' contributions to be levied.
 - v. The CJC to adopt a sub-committee structure, and form a view on co-option, who, where, scope of participation, and whether voting or non-voting.
 - vi. Establish meeting governance and support arrangements for the CJC.
 - vii. Develop and establish a Scrutiny framework, when the Welsh Government's regulations on CJs provides the relevant basis for the arrangements.
 - viii. Establish the Governance and Audit Committee and Standards Committee, and appoint members.

- ix. Formal decision by the local authorities, together with the consent of the other partners in GA2, to transition the NWEAB to the CJC.
- x. Establish the Governance Agreement with the CJC in relation to the Economic Ambition Board functions, and any other "host authority" agreements, with the CJC required to implement the proposed arrangement.
- xi. Appoint statutory officers.
- xii. Prepare a 12-month business plan.
- xiii. Agree how the CJC's business transactions are established / hosted.
- xiv. Prepare and adopt CJC Standing Orders and basic governance documentation.

Financial Implications

45. Approving the decision sought here regarding the governance model would not add any financial implication for the Council. However, there will be an unavoidable ongoing cost (administrative burdens servicing the CJC and professional resource requirements) for local authorities to be able to administer and deliver the CJC's statutory functions. These costs are yet to be fully identified, but the direction set by this report is to make the CJC work effectively while minimising the financial burden on the Council.

Wider Duties

46. In developing the proposals regard should be had, amongst other matters, to:
 - the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards,
 - Public sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties Councils must in making decisions have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics.
 - The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act') is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act places a 'well-being duty' on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales - a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and is globally responsible.
47. Under the Welsh Government's Regulations, the CJC is subject to the Equalities Act, Future Generations Act, and other legislation, in the same way as local authorities.

Local member's views

Not relevant

Views of the statutory officers**The Monitoring Officer:**

There are many elements in relation to the establishment of Corporate Joint Committees which stem from the creation of these bodies in April 2021. An overview of these is provided in the report but in the main they are matters to be decided on by the new body. The focus of the report is, appropriately therefore on the status of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the Growth Deal and in particular how to respond to the advent of the CJC from the perspective of the project. There is an acknowledgment in the report that it is a decision in principle which is needed at this point in order to facilitate development work and bring a final proposition forward. This is appropriate considering the matters which need to be addressed and understood. I have had constant input into the development of the report and the recommendations and they reflect my advice.

Head of Finance:

I have collaborated with the Cabinet Member in the preparation of this report and I confirm the content.

Agenda Item 8

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



A report to a meeting of the Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting: 21 December, 2021

Cabinet Member: Cllr Catrin Wager

Liaison Officers: Steffan Jones, Head of Highways and Municipal Department
Huw Williams, Head of Gwynedd Consultancy Department

Contact Numbers: 32402 / 32426

Subject: PERFORMANCE CHALLENGING REPORT BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND MUNICIPAL AND GWYNEDD CONSULTANCY

THE DECISION SOUGHT

To accept and note the information in the report.

THE REASONS WHY A DECISION IS NEEDED

In order to ensure effective performance management.

Highways and Municipal Department

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on what has been happening in the areas for which I am responsible as Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal. This includes outlining the latest developments against pledges within the 2018-2023 Gwynedd Council Plan; the progress of performance measures; and the latest on the savings and cuts plans.
- 1.2 I wish to remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised by myself at a meeting of the Highways and Municipal Department's Management Team, which also included representatives from the relevant Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 On the whole I am comfortable with the performance of the measures being reported. The Department is facing considerable work in order to ensure that we will reach the Welsh Government's target for statutory recycling by 2025. There will be an opportunity to look at

other measures as we complete the main project (Clean and Tidy Communities) and we look forward to developing the target and producing an action programme.

2. PROJECTS of the GWYNEDD COUNCIL PLAN 2018-2023 (Improvement Priorities)

- 2.1 Below we note the progress made to date against the Department's improvement priority projects. Overall, I feel that all projects are currently going in the right direction against the pledges we have made in the Council Plan. However, an important part of the work is engaging with the communities in order to understand and hear what matters to them. This work will accompany the 'Our Area Engagement Plan 2035'.

Clean and Tidy Communities

As part of this project we will work with the residents and communities of Gwynedd by engaging with them to develop an Action Plan corresponding to this priority, expanding and developing community partnerships to improve the quality and appearance of the County. The principles agreed can be seen below.

The Department's aim is to work with the residents and communities of Gwynedd to have clean and tidy communities by:

1. Working with the residents and communities of Gwynedd
2. Ensuring clean and tidy communities
3. Having materials remain in use for as long as possible, with the ambition of becoming a waste-free County
4. Respecting and protecting our special environment.

As outlined above, this work will follow the timetable in 'Our Area Engagement Plan 2035' that is eager to use the 'Engagement HQ' interactive forum for communities to discuss various matters. This software is already being used by a number of other Councils to conduct successful and modern consultations. The Department will also initiate engagement work with staff/the workforce. We are in the process of organising virtual focus groups where there will be an opportunity for staff to share their ideas/views regarding how to achieve 'clean and tidy communities'. A task team has been established, and meetings regularly take place.

As part of the 'Our Area Engagement Programme', observations were gathered about what is important to the residents from all regeneration areas during September/October 2021. The majority of the comments related to untidiness and a lack of investment in enhancing our communities. The following are some of the observations collected:

'Not enough spent on infrastructure to upgrade/tidy up' (Bro Ardudwy)

'Work needed to tidy-up and improve standards, paths, woods, hedgerows, walls' (Bro Peris)

'More projects to enhance the community and bring the community together' (Bro Peris)

'Areas of the town look untidy e.g. Pool Street' (Caernarfon area)

I will update you on this project in my next report.

Strengthen Communication and Engagement

The Highways and Municipal Department is very visible and every resident in the County is affected by some aspects of the service. Value can be added to the Department's work by means of effective communication and engagement plans; for example, campaigns to prevent littering or dog fouling, or campaigns and guidelines to encourage re-use, re-purposing and reduction of waste. It is also crucial that residents have confidence in the Department's services and that their concerns and enquiries are dealt with effectively.

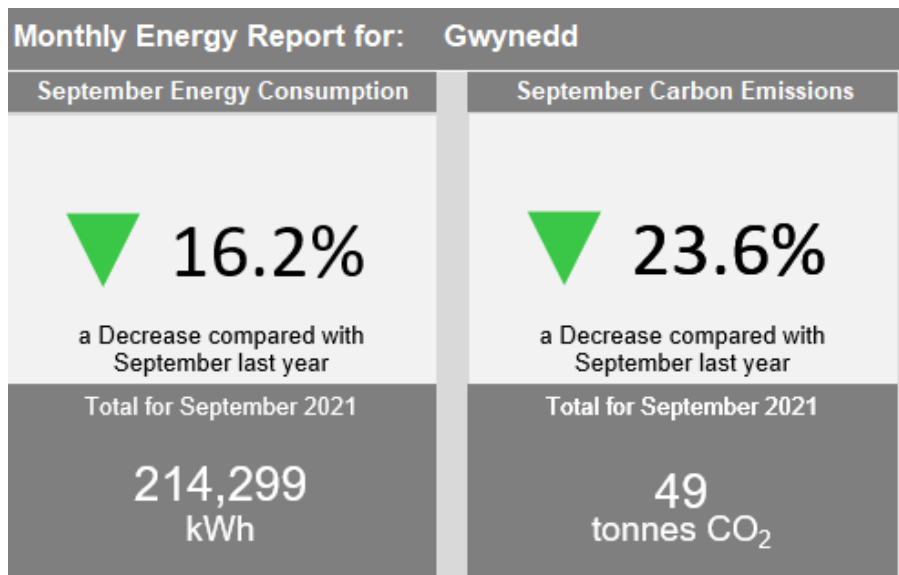
This project has commenced recently, beginning by reviewing our current engagement arrangements - a task group was established with cross-departmental representatives (the Galw Gwynedd team, the internet team and the Corporate Communications and Engagement Unit). The work of mapping out our processes to ensure they are accurate and up-to-date is operational. As a group we have identified that better use is required of the FFOS system to strengthen our communication streams with Gwynedd residents. For example, it is possible to inform a list of addresses within the system if a vehicle has broken down or if any other matter affects their collection day. Therefore, meetings are being held with the Team Leaders to make use of this feature within FFOS.

Another project that is about to start and linked to this improvement priority is the 'Mapping Services Project'. The hope of this project is to map our assets/services on the Council's website. Local residents/staff will be able to see a number of the department's assets/services such as street lamps, street bins and roadworks. When choosing an asset or service the status will be displayed. I.e. if someone has reported a problem with a street lamp this will be shown with the asset's status and when exactly the asset will receive attention by a member of staff. We hope that this project will strengthen our communication stream with Gwynedd residents by sharing the details of our services/assets in an innovative and modern way.

Other projects

Programme for Changing Street Lighting to LED lamps

In my last report I noted that the work of changing our street lighting and signs to LED technology was continuing. The Street Lighting Service is working on replacing street lights and signs with LED technology, and also include a dimming mechanism. This work is continuing and we are now in the project's final year, and are pleased to report that approximately 15,000 lamps have been replaced with approximately 2,500 remaining. Since 2015/16, we have replaced more than 14,300 street lights and signs with LED technology. The graph below illustrates the reduction in CO2 emissions (Street Lighting) as a result of the project. We anticipate that the work will be completed by the end of March, 2022.



Project to Review the Council's Fleet Management

One element of this project is managing the use of Council vehicles. This project is still in progress but there has been some delay with the work because of specific legal requirements that are set out in employment law. I am pleased to report that, with assistance from the Council's Human Resources Service, we have now begun the process of consulting with the staff. The project is expected to be completed by the new financial year.

Another important element of the fleet management project is the decarbonisation of the fleet. This corresponds with 'Improvement Priority 8 of the Council Plan 2018-23 - Respond to the Climate Change Crisis'. We have committed to taking decisive action to reduce carbon emissions and strive for a zero-carbon future, which includes looking for innovative approaches.

We have conducted a review of all the Council's vehicles with the support of the Welsh Government, and are busy producing an action programme. We will look at opportunities to add to our small fleet of electric vehicles and also increase charging points within our depot and offices. We have received a £300k grant for this purpose. The collection service will receive two electric refuse collection vehicles and these will be with us before the end of the financial year.

The Head of Department also sits on the Deeside Hydrogen Hub board which is very important in considering alternative technology in the area of heavy load vehicles such as refuse vehicles and gritters.

Playing Fields Project

We know that playing fields are important for children, parents and child carers, but as play equipment is expensive and funding is very scarce, maintaining them so that they are safe for children and young people to enjoy, is challenging. The Department is resuming this project and updating the work that was carried out up until March 2020. This project is exploring the interest by Community/Town Councils or community/groups in looking after and running children's playing fields.

The Department has already corresponded with community councils by letter for their initial observations but there was a delay due to the pandemic. The Department has now resumed discussions. The Department will also contact other groups and partners within the community that would be interested in forming a partnership with the service. There is a risk to this project as at present, only around five Community Councils have expressed an interest in holding further discussions. As a result, the Service will open discussions with community/interest groups and will look at opportunities for working alongside them rather than transferring the responsibility entirely. We are of the view that playgrounds as a resource will be a priority for our residents as we emerge from the crisis. The Service has borne significant cuts and the equipment is now in dire need of investment. By opening the discussions with others, we anticipate that opportunities will arise to attract grants.

We will resume this work, and the Department will submit a bid to the transformation fund by looking at a potential alternative plan. We have also submitted a grant application to improve the play provision in seven playing fields within the County.

3. PERFORMANCE

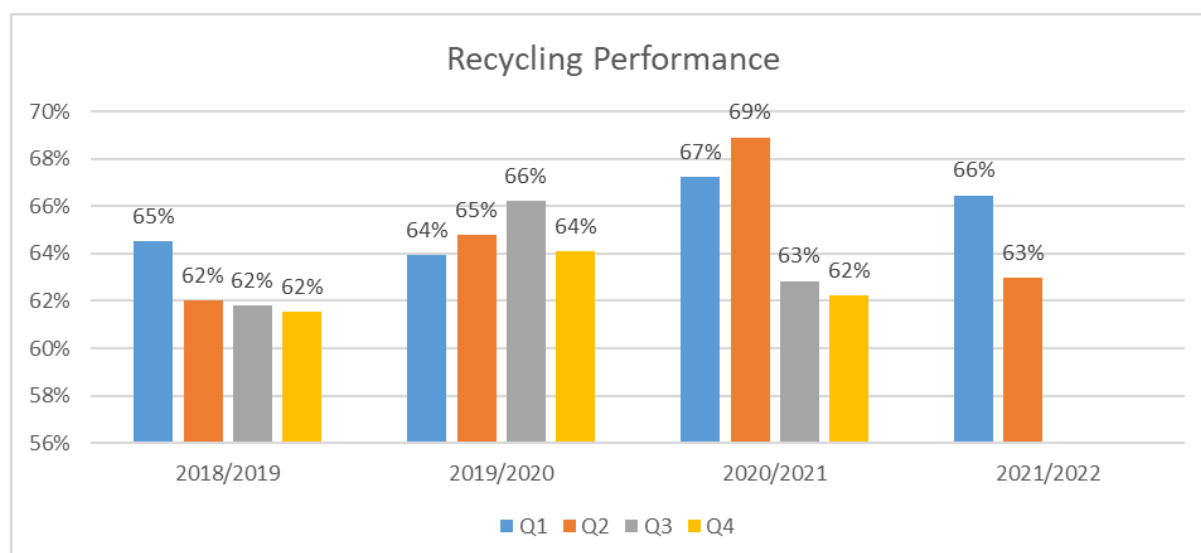
- 3.1 We remain in a very different period with a great deal of pressure on our resources and staff. However, we can be proud of what has been achieved in new and challenging circumstances, and the Department has managed to ensure the continuity of our services while also complying with the requirements of the crisis. In terms of the Department's measures, I am generally happy with their performance. Nevertheless, I draw your attention to the main issues arising.
- 3.2 In the previous report, I noted that the changes to the new system of waste collection would be implemented in the Meirionnydd area during the end of 2020/21, I am pleased to record that this work was introduced on time and the project has now been completed across the County.
- 3.3 **Waste and Recycling Service** - as reported previously, it is imperative that waste is handled correctly if we are to protect our environment. An Economy that promotes reuse and recycling to reduce waste (known as the Circular Economy) is vital as we work towards this aim.

During the past year, we managed to attract £1.4m grant funding to deliver projects in this field. Below, is an update on some of the projects that have been/are being addressed:

- *Llandygai Bangor Recycling Centre Adaptation Project, which includes establishing a reuse shop* - work completed on the site and is now fully operational - our shop is scheduled to open early in the new year.
- *Repair cafe project* - establish a network of shops across the County which will see opportunities for training and the repair of items.
- *Alterations to the Caergylchu Materials Recycling Centre, Caernarfon* – work has been completed and is now fully operational, this has improved the quality of the treated materials.
- *Community food provision project* - we have provided 11 food hubs with the required equipment, which have all been distributed by now. Many of the hubs have received commercial fridges and freezers to provide food to a wide range of people in our communities. We will build on the links that have already been made in order to look at expanding on further opportunities.
- *Warws Werdd and Antur Waunfawr joint project* - infrastructure work on the site completed.
- *The Repair Café project and Re-use/bulky items project* - this introduced a provision on the high street in several centres to provide opportunities to repair items so they can be reused.
- *Finish distributing the Cartgylchu* - targeting the rural areas of the County.

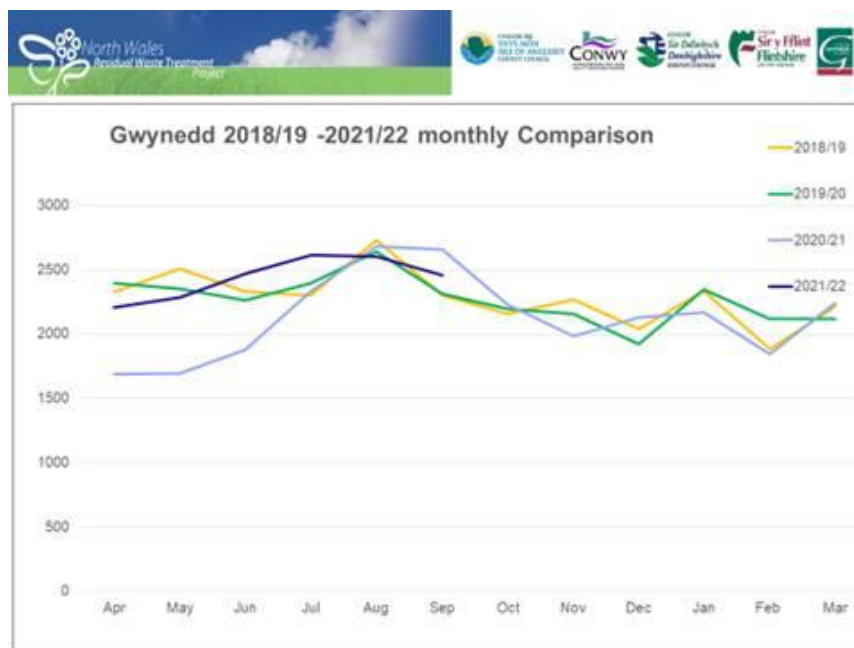
Recycling bins on the street – The Department is looking to introduce litter site recycling bins within our main centres, we will fund these bins via the Tidy Towns grant. We will coordinate messages to raise public awareness to ensure that they place the disposed materials in the correct bins.

The graph below highlights our recycling performance per year and per quarter. We are concerned that the impact of residual waste has an effect on our performance that can be seen in quarter 2 this year. The situation will need to be monitored during quarter 3 to ensure that we do not fall further.



	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2018/19	65%	62%	62%	62%	62.31%
2019/20	64%	65%	66%	64%	64.74%
2020/21	67%	69%	63%	62%	65.87%
2021/22	66%	63%			64.64% (half year)
2022/23					
2023/24					
2024/25					Must be at 70%

An increase has been seen in the residual waste collected which is concerning, but possibly expected. This graph illustrates the situation, comparing with residual weight for the same period in 2020. The situation will require monitoring over the course of this year.



We handle all the recyclable materials collected across the County, sorting and packaging them to be sent for processing. The table below gives an idea of the weight of recyclable materials collected from household waste.

Material	Tonnes 2021/22 (April-September)	Where does it go	The recycling process
Glass	2,531.86t	We send the glass collected to Berryman recycling company in South Kirby.	Berryman specialises in new methods of treating glass so the material can have a second life. This new material is used to produce new bottles/jars for construction products, insulation and many more.
Plastic Bottles	510.44t	Jayplas Recycling. (This company has several sites across the UK which specialise in recycling different types of plastics to the highest quality).	Here, the plastic bottles are sent through a processing system to produce PET Flakes which are then sold to companies that mould them to produce new food packaging.
Paper	1,6102.20t	Palm Paper Mill near King's Lynn.	Here, our paper bulks are sent through a newsprint machine. This is the largest machine of its type in the world. At a speed of nearly 2,000m/minute it has the capacity to produce 400,000 metric tonnes of newsprint per annum.
Food	2,693.78t	GwryriAD Anaerobic Digestion Facility in Clynnog Fawr.	GwryriAD - which is run by Biogen on behalf of the Council - is a specialist centre that converts food waste into electrical energy for the national grid. It also produces fertiliser for agricultural land.
Steel Cans	A total of 252.73t of steel/aluminium cans.	EMR (European Metal Recycling).	Our steel cans are processed at the EMR site near Liverpool. Here, our cans are crushed using a mega shredder that has the power to recycle a car every 15 seconds.
Aluminium Cans		Tandom Metallurgical Recycling.	Tandom uses a shredding line for recycling our aluminium cans. Through this shredding line our cans are broken down into 50mm particles. The steel is then separated using a magnet.
Garden Waste	1,904.76t	Gwrtaith Gwynedd.	The green waste that is processed on the Harri Parri/Gwrtaith Gwynedd site near Pwllheli is turned constantly in compost wind-rows. The vast majority of the processed material is composted and used on farmers' fields - including Harry's.
Residual Waste	Domestic – 9,198.48t Commercial – 2768.58t Street cleaning - 978.82t Bulky - 141.2t Recycling centres - 1382.26t	Parc Adfer.	Our residual waste is processed on the Parc Adfer site in Deeside. This site is a heat and power facility that generates enough energy to power more than 45,000 homes and businesses in the UK. The site was established as part of a Public-Private Partnership with support from the Welsh Government, to serve five local authorities that are part of the North Wales Residual Waste Treatment Project.

The Department is also facing pressure from the demand for receptacles, the levels are beyond what we can cope with within our programme/capacity, and the waiting list is currently longer than expected. We are working hard to reduce the waiting time.

Ffordd Gwynedd Review on the Waste Service – There has been a slippage in terms of commencing the Ffordd Gwynedd review due to the lack of staff within the field to take ownership/lead. The work will now commence by the end of November.

- 3.4 **Highway Maintenance Service** - Since the Ffordd Gwynedd review of the service, the new system of working has now been operational since 1st April this year. It is pleasing to note that this work has been successful and has addressed the historic system of working. We are also in the process of updating our Asset Maintenance Plan to reflect the new requirements in the Code of Practice, which emphasises risk management. We are also reconsidering our system for maintaining road verges and dealing with weeds - this will be covered in the review of our Highway Assets Maintenance Plan.
- 3.5 **Street Cleaning Service** - there has been considerable pressure on this service since the pandemic, where litter, overflowing bins and dog-fouling problems seem to have increased. While we are keeping on top of the situation, I predict that issues like these will come to the fore in the work on the 'Clean and Tidy Communities' project. I am also pleased to report that we undertook a consultation on a Dog Order which will be introduced, and much good material was recorded from this consultation. Another element of work that will be part of this service are the Clean and Tidy Communities Teams'. A report was submitted to the Cabinet on 30/11/21 outlining our intention to establish work teams to improve the image and enhance our communities in the County. We are pleased to report that our decision was unanimously supported.
- 3.6 **Bereavement Service** - despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, I am incredibly pleased to be able to report that the Bereavement/Crematorium Service was able to continue to offer a full service to the residents of Gwynedd throughout 2020/21.
- 3.7 **Ash Dieback** - A team has now been established to deal with Ash Dieback. The team's main purpose is to conduct surveys of ash trees on the Council's land and road verges, assess their condition and draft a work programme to deal with those that cause a safety risk to the public. In addition, they will offer advice to Council departments and private tree owners regarding Ash Dieback and prepare information packs and a variety of resources on the Council's external website to raise public awareness of the disease.

Another important role for the team is to issue private owners with legal notices if their trees cause a safety risk to users of Council land.

Although the team will to all intents and purposes act as a 'one stop shop', in relation to Council land and roads, they will not take over the responsibilities of regular inspection and treatment of trees by each department.

Since the team has been established, they have commenced revisiting some of the sites inspected by specialist contractors to determine if the trees designated as red at the time have got worse and also if nearby trees previously designated as amber have deteriorated. The team follow a recognised tree risk assessment to deliver this and they will use the results to form a tree cutting programme for this financial year (there is a revenue budget of £150,000 available for the work). It should be noted that trees included on the programme should be prioritised based on the risk to the public and not according to area, department or any other method that is not risk-based.

Trees absorb carbon and store it whilst releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere. As a result, our tree cutting programme can have an impact on the Council's ability to deliver its target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. To this end, the team is working very closely with the Countryside Service in the Environment Department to look into ways of compensating for this and to try and partner with other authorities and organisations to prepare plans to grow and re-plant trees that have been cut.

- 3.8 **BSI Accreditations** - The Department has been successful in transferring from Accreditation 18001 (BSI) and reaching the requirements of 45001 which we were required to complete before autumn of this year. This means that we are meeting high requirements in terms of service delivery, with management systems and Health and Safety arrangements that are monitored by the BSI for the accreditation.

An audit is carried out twice a year to ensure that we are adhering to the requirements, which is done on various fields within our scope.

We also have the following Accreditations:

- BSI 14001 – Environment
- BSI 9001 – Quality Management

The same procedure of audit applies, where a BSI auditor will visit the Department twice a year to conduct a detailed audit of our arrangements.

4. FINANCIAL POSITION/SAVINGS

- 4.1 The Highways and Municipal Department ended the 2020/21 financial year in a balanced financial position as a result of the receipt of grants from the Government to compensate for our additional expenditure and loss of income due to the pandemic.
- 4.2 In the financial review submitted to the Cabinet on 12 October, it was reported that an overspend of 982k was anticipated by the Highways and Municipal Department for 2021-22. The overspend and most obvious problems can be seen once again this year in the waste collection field. The Department has commissioned reviews from Ffordd Gwynedd and WRAP to look in detail at this Service. There are also a number of historic savings that have not yet been realised, and this in turn places additional pressure on the Department's budgets. The next detailed review will be undertaken at the end of November and reported to the Cabinet early in January.

5. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

The Department will prioritise moving forward with the highlighted projects and will also prioritise reducing the noted overspend figure.

With the Department delivering front-line services, we will continue with the aim of providing the best service to the residents of Gwynedd.

Gwynedd Consultancy Department

6. INTRODUCTION

6.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on developments in the fields within my remit as Cabinet Member for YGC. This will include outlining the latest developments against pledges within the 2018-2023 Gwynedd Council Plan; the progress of performance measures; and the latest on the savings and cuts schemes.

6.2 On the whole, I am satisfied with the performance of the measures for which I am responsible and I am grateful to the Department for their work. I am satisfied with the Department's financial performance.

6.3 As a result of publishing the National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales (July 2020), I look forward to developing the Local Strategy. This will be an opportunity to put appropriate measures and priorities in place to reduce flooding risk and make the communities of Gwynedd safer.

7. PROJECTS IN THE GWYNEDD COUNCIL PLAN 2018-2023

The Department does not lead on any projects in the 2018-23 Council Plan. The Environment Department is leading on the Climate Change Action Plan with YGC supporting it on flood risk management and coastal erosion matters, which forms an important part of the scheme.

Below, please find attached information about the three very high risks, and it is noted that risks 2.1 and 2.2 are a fundamental part of renewing the Local Flood Risk Management and Coastal Erosion Strategy (Local Strategy), which is to be completed by October 2023. The Local Strategy will feed into the Council's Climate Change plan.

The risks in 2.1 and 2.2 have been challenged by the Communities Scrutiny Committee.

7.1 The risk of inland flooding because of the effect of climate change.

My interdepartmental Flooding Project Group is in the process of prioritising inland areas by uploading information to the catchment area prioritisation matrix.

In addition, the Department is chairing cross-departmental meetings to ensure an awareness of flooding projects, and to seek to add elements from other departments that will maximise value for those projects.

7.2 **The risk of flooding from the sea in coastal areas because of the effect of climate change.**

The Department is working to identify vulnerable communities in terms of the risks from the effects of storms, erosion and coastal flooding. My interdepartmental Flooding Project Group is in the process of formulating a coastal prioritisation matrix. Then, the department will fill-in the matrix in order to identify the list of vulnerable communities that will require support.

7.3 **The impact of climate change on Fairbourne.**

The document titled Fairbourne: A Framework for the Future, contains five work streams that are developing individual plans - Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Plan (FCERM), People and the Built Environment Plan, Infrastructure Management Plan, Business Support Plan and Natural Environment Plan. The Fairbourne Moving Forward Project Board includes the following bodies: Arthog Community Council (Chairing), Gwynedd Local Councillor, Gwynedd Council, Scottish Power, NRW, Community Ambassador, Network Rail, the Health Board, Welsh Water and Snowdonia National Park.

Recent progress has been as follows;

- Work has commenced to get up-to-date terms of reference in place.
- A temporary Project Manager is in place.
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are now leading on a Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Plan. NRW are in the process of reviewing the condition of its assets and preparing an Outline Business Case (OBC).
- Gwynedd is leading on the People and the Built Environment Plan by working cross-departmentally. The Strategic Outline Business Case is moving ahead to assess the feasibility of different options to support the community. As part of this work, the Board has decided that a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) needs to be completed with the community. This work will also analyse the population's options. This will provide better information of the actual position, and extend our ability to support Arthog Community Council.

8. PERFORMANCE

8.1 This year continues in new and challenging circumstances. We can be proud that the Department is succeeding to ensure the continuation of its services whilst complying with the requirements of the crisis, and it continues to fulfil its responsibilities. I am happy with the Department's performance.

Ymgynghoriaeth Gwynedd Consultancy (YGC) acts as:

- A commercial department that brings substantial income to the Council.
- Undertakes statutory functions in the field of water and flood management.

I now draw your attention to the main matters for YGC, starting with the commercial side.

8.2 Commercial Work

8.2.1 The income and structure of the commercial work.

The four Services are:

- Water and the Environment
- Building and Infrastructure
- Business and Project Delivery
- Technical

Again, this year is challenging in terms of striking a balance of work as the schedules of many clients have changed during the year. However, we can be proud of what has been achieved, and the Department has succeeded to obtain a robust work programme.

In terms of the financial measures, I am happy with their performance, which is important bearing in mind that a vast majority of the Department's officers are involved with commercial work, which brings an income of over £5.4 million to the Council annually. As the staffing structure is extended, the income target will rise.

The work pattern for the first and second quarters follows the same work pattern as last year. Please see below the main clients that the Department works for, along with an estimate of the 2021/22 income:

NMWTRA (£2.1M)	Housing and Property Department (£0.52M)	Environment Department - Transportation and Street Care (£0.36M)
Highways and Municipal Department (£0.44M)	Ceredigion County Council (£0.71M)	Welsh Government (£0.82M)

8.2.2 I note that there are 260 projects are on the books to date by the department ranging from assessment of bridges and retaining walls after storms to the construction of Vaynol School.

8.2.3 Over the past year, the environmental team has been working on a number of schemes. They have conducted several protected species surveys to ensure that natural habitats are protected, and have also provided environmental improvement measures for the schemes. In addition, the team is taking advantage of opportunities to add elements that increase biodiversity on schemes. Environmental and sustainability matters influence all types of developments. Protecting conservation and improving the environment are all-important and are critical components in sustainable development and implementation.

The team is working on many projects, including the following work:

- This year, YGC ecologists have been on-site conducting over 300 hours of bat surveys.
- They have conducted a protected species survey of over 500 road structures over the summer.
- We supervised environmental matters on the Caernarfon and Bontnewydd bypass project.
- Assessed environmental matters on over 20 active travel plans.
- Responded to matters relating to plant invasion on the trunk road network.

- 8.2.4 The flooding and environmental risk teams make a substantial contribution to developing new projects to ensure no projects have a detrimental impact on our natural environment. By working closer to nature, the department has developed a plan that manages flow more naturally in the Wnion catchment area. This scheme has been jointly-developed with Snowdonia National Park to plant trees, plants, and create ponds in the catchment area.
- 8.2.5 The Department is very glad to maintain and develop local employment through the structure, which are quality jobs. Due to opportunities in the market, the Department has added nine posts to the structure this year, with plans to add another 11 posts over the coming 18 months.
- 8.2.6 One challenge faced by the department is the retirement of experienced officers and the growth in the size of the department, there is a need for more officers on team leader level and above, who have professional qualifications. The management team is giving strong support to officers who have the aspiration and ability to gain professional qualifications and the department is collaborating with educational bodies and professional bodies.
- 8.2.7 The Department gives high priority to staff training. The Department is the Regional lead on the North Wales Regional Professional Training Agreement on engineering work via the ICE (Institution of Civil Engineers). At present, there are eight trainee officers. This will enable the officers to develop their skills, and enable them to work on more challenging schemes. Staff are also aware that professional qualifications are key to attracting and winning work.
- 8.2.8 The department's succession plan includes eight senior officers who are studying Level 7 Diploma qualifications in Strategic Leadership and Management, including the four Service Managers.

8.3 Undertaking statutory functions in the field of water and flood management.

- 8.3.1 During the financial year, the Water and Environment Service in its client role manages flood prevention plans that will reduce the risk to Gwynedd residents. The Flooding Service is working on nine business bids in order to attract investment to deliver more flood alleviation projects including Barmouth, Hirael, and the Ogwen catchment area.

It is intended to complete these projects over the next 3-4 years. To succeed, there is a need to add some of the 11 new posts to this Service. Also, as with the North Promenade scheme in Barmouth (Arup), and the Porthdinllaen scheme (Mott MacDonald), there is a need to employ specialist consultants to provide sufficient capacity to complete elements of the work, or the whole projects.

- 8.3.2 There is a programme of major and minor schemes across the County that respond to previous flooding incidents. The department is working jointly with the highways department to complete 10 small-scale plans in the current financial year, which reduce the risk to almost 100 houses.
- 8.3.3 I will continue to work with the Department to hold appropriate discussions with key stakeholders including the Welsh Government, community councils and others such as the private and third sectors.

- 8.3.4 A flooding assets management system has been developed jointly with the Council's Information Technology service. This enables us to store all our data assets, along with data regarding flooding events all within one system.
- 8.3.5 The assets to be inspected during the 2021/22 year have been completed. This has enabled us to identify the condition of our assets and programme any required maintenance. The assets inspection work has been submitted before the Communities Scrutiny Committee. Work to repair defective assets has been scheduled and the department continues to monitor the assets in the meantime.
- 8.3.6 North Promenade, Barmouth has suffered damage and coastal flooding for some years now. The work of drawing up an Outline Business Case (OBC) has been completed. The next step is to commence the North Promenade detail design.
- 8.3.7 There is a duty upon us to investigate flooding incidents under the Flood and Water Management Act. Although, in the 2021/22 financial year, there were 101 internal flooding incidents.
- 8.3.8 Work to approve Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) is continuing and the number of applications is increasing. 48 applications were received in 2020/21 and this year, the department has already received 47 applications. The team has increased by one officer to meet the increased work load.
- 8.3.9 Keeping our coastal assets safe for the public is a priority and therefore risks need to be assessed for the coastal assets owned by the Council, the department has submitted a business case application for funding to address this work on a cross departmental basis.

9. Accreditation

9.1 Investors In People (IIP) Accreditations.

Back in October 2018, the department received an "Investors in People" accreditation for the second time. Three years have passed, and it is now time for the department to renew the "Investors in People" accreditation. At the end of the process, the IIP report and action plan will tie into the department's business plan for 2022/23.

9.2 BSi Accreditations

The Department has been successful in transferring from Accreditation 18001 (BSi) and reaching the requirements of 45001 which we were required to complete. This means that we are meeting high requirements in terms of service delivery, with management systems and Health and Safety arrangements that are monitored by the BSI for the accreditation. Also, the department has the following Accreditations, namely - BSi 14001 - Environment and BSi 9001 - Quality. The procedure in terms of the audit is that BSi inspectors visit the Department twice a year in order to conduct a detailed audit of our arrangements.

Internal audits are being completed in the department by the Business Unit and the department is collaborating with the Treasurer's department to complete specific audits, e.g. this year on the work and responsibilities of CDM (Construction Design Management Regulations 2015) Health and Safety responsibilities in the design field.

10. FINANCIAL POSITION/SAVINGS

- 10.1 At the end of Quarter 2 of the 2021/22 financial year, the scheduled work profile is consistent with the previous years' profiles and our clients had sufficient work for the rest of the year. However, as the Llanbedr By-pass scheme is not going ahead, there is a risk of not reaching our budget target, if the work does not find additional work. Consequently, the Department estimates a *deficit* of £5,155 from an income of over £5.4 million to the Council.

11. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 11.1 The Department will prioritise progressing statutory water and flood management functions, as well as finding more commercial work to meet our target for 2021-22. The Department will continue with the aim of providing the best service to the residents of Gwynedd.

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

Head of Finance (Views on the Highways and Municipal Report) :

I can confirm that the information presented in paragraph 4.2 of the report, on the financial position, is a fair and accurate reflection of what has already been reported to Cabinet following the financial review of the situation at the end of August. The Department has some savings plans that have proven complex to deliver, and I agree that this is a burden on the revenue budget. These financial concerns have been addressed recently at a meeting between the Highways and Municipal Department, the Finance Department and the Chief Executive.

Head of Finance (View on the Gwynedd Consultancy Report) :

I can confirm that the contents of Part 5 of the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of YGC”.

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting: 21 DECEMBER 2021

Cabinet Member: Councillor Gareth Wyn Griffith

Contact Officer: Dafydd Wyn Williams - Head of Environment Department

Contact Number: 32371

Subject: CABINET MEMBER'S CHALLENGE PERFORMANCE REPORT - ENVIRONMENT

THE DECISION SOUGHT

To accept and note the information in the report.

THE REASON WHY A DECISION IS NEEDED

In order to ensure effective performance management

1. INTRODUCTION AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on developments in the fields within my remit as Cabinet Member for the Environment. This includes outlining the latest developments against pledges within the 2018-2023 Gwynedd Council Plan; the progress of performance measures; and the latest on the savings and cuts plans.
- 1.2 I will remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at a meeting of the Environment Department's Management Team, which also included representatives from the Communities Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 On the whole, I am satisfied with the department's performance under the circumstances and I acknowledge the challenges that have faced this department over the past year and the impact of that on some services. However, I am confident that the department is monitoring these matters and is planning appropriately in order to recover the situation. I will elaborate on the progress within the report.

2. GWYNEDD COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES 2018-2023

2.1 Climate Change Action Plan

Following the Cabinet's decisions back in January to fund the project manager to lead on the work of coordinating the council's efforts in the field and the action plan; an appointment has been made and a Climate Change Programme Manager commenced in the role at the beginning of July. A work programme has been developed and meetings of the Climate Change Board are being held to steer the work for producing the Climate Change Action Plan. It is also intended to hold sessions with all Council Members so that they can have an input into the work.

- 2.2. The proposal is that there will be two parts to the Climate Change Action Plan, with the first part focusing on the direct impact the Council is having on climate change, with this part adopted by the end of March 2022. The second part of the Plan will focus more on the further steps that the Council can take to contribute towards mitigating the impacts of climate change, with this happening during 2022/23.

2.3 Public Protection Capacity

The department is looking at plans in an attempt to provide more resilient Public Protection Services in the future in order to contribute towards protecting the health of Gwynedd's communities and to support businesses. The Department has conducted a review of the Public Protection Service's staffing structures, with the objective of retaining the expertise we have, create more robust staffing structure that will need to include a continuation of the tracing work, increase capacity, and plan for future succession. The Department also has financial plans that go hand-in-hand with the actions required as a result of reviewing the staffing structures, and this includes submitting revenue bids to the Council's transformation fund.

2.4 Control of Motorhomes

The department has been leading on a piece of work jointly with the Economy and Community Department, in an attempt to respond to the challenges that a substantial increase in the number of motorhomes visiting the county have presented over the past eighteen months. As well as short-term responses to the challenges (e.g. enforcement where possible, erecting signage in locations across the County, communicating and raising awareness), research has been conducted into the motorhomes sector in an attempt to look at whether more long-term solutions are needed to obtain better control. This research was submitted to the Cabinet on 9 November 2021, when it was resolved:

- i. To authorise the Head of Environment Department, in consultation with the Head of Education and Community to hold a pilot project to use up to six of the Council's parking sites (or part of the sites) within the Gwynedd Planning Authority Area, to provide facilities for motor homes to stay overnight, including the designation of the locations, but subject to securing capital funding and necessary permissions.
- ii. That a further report on the outcomes of the pilot are submitted to the Cabinet within three years.
- iii. Give consideration to and take enforcement measures to accompany the above.
- iv. Present the research to the Welsh Government and ask them to review the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960.

- 2.5 The Department has now established a Project Board to implement the decision.

3. PERFORMANCE

Below, I outline the main matters that have derived from the department's performance since the beginning of July 2021/22. The information does not refer to each service in the department, only towards those we feel that need to be brought to your attention.

Planning Service

- 3.1 It is not possible for me to report on our usual measure which shows **satisfaction with the service** (C1). This is because the customer care questionnaires have not been undertaken since the beginning of the pandemic period as we have prioritised the continuation of day-to-day services. Normally, this work is undertaken via telephone calls, but discussions are continuing with the providers of the Service's back office system so that the questionnaires are automatically facilitated via the system.
- 3.2 Reference was made in the department's 2020/21 Annual Report that it had taken more time for us to reach decisions as a result of various factors, including the impact of the pandemic on committees, lack of capacity due to long-term sickness or working arrangements during the crisis and a delay in receiving responses from the statutory consultees. The **How quickly all planning applications have taken on average to be determined** (C2) measure continues to increase and is higher than the average of 63 days in 2019/20, 68 days in 2020/21, 88 days in 2020/21, with the average for 2021/22 being 94 days. Nevertheless, and excluding the month of August, an increase has been seen in the number of unresolved planning applications since I reported to you in September, as officers return from periods of sickness, but this is too early to have a positive influence on the performance. Also, the department has recruited a temporary planning officer for a period of one year to assist with this work, and I have asked the Department to look at the resources that will be needed in the future in order to meet the demand for the service.
- 3.3 During the period from 01/07/21 to 31/10/21, the Planning Enforcement Unit received 117 **new enforcement cases** relating to breaches of planning regulations with the total since 1 April 2021 at 207. During the period, it was reported that 20 of the new cases were investigated and 79 cases were closed. The reduction in the Unit's capacity from 4 to 2 officers, as well as the time it takes to deal with complex cases, makes it very challenging for the Unit to cope with the workload, which creates a back-log of cases that continue to be open, whilst new cases continue to come in. In an attempt to respond to this, a temporary officer was employed in May 2021 and following a period within the support team (Department's Business Service), the officer was transferred to the enforcement team in August 2021. I have asked the Department to also look at plans to respond to the short- and long-term requirements of the Planning Service in relation to the enforcement work.

Joint Planning Policy Service

- 3.4 I am pleased to report that the research led by the Service, "Managing the use of dwellings as holiday homes", is a significant piece of work that has triggered discussions and a national level response to the matters surrounding holiday homes, with all of this now seen in a series of Welsh Government consultations.

- 3.5 The Service has completed the third Annual Monitoring Report (2020/21) for the Joint Local Development Plan that has been submitted to Welsh Government (along with the 2019/20 Report), since October 2021. The three Annual Monitoring Reports that have been provided include important evidence that feeds into the statutory review of the Plan that has commenced since August 2021. During November 2021, a six-week period of public consultation was commenced on the Review Report (following a review of the current Plan), and awareness raising sessions were held for all Council Members to correspond to this.

Building Control Service

- 3.6 During this reporting period in 2021/2022, an increase was seen in building control applications, with 302 applications being submitted compared with 241 during the same period in the previous year. This results in an increase in the fees being attracted to the Council. However, the significant projects, which charge a higher fee, continue to be low. A private Approved Inspector has been established in the sector recently and so, the local competition has had a negative impact on the number of applications that reach us. This has meant that the market proportion of building control applications received has reduced from **85%** in 2020/2021 to **77%** at present. It is also noted during the past months that there is evidence of the Service losing officers to the private sector, and consequently, the department is looking at the Service's structure in terms of its resilience, and the nature of the work in terms of work that attracts a fee and work that does not (e.g. enforcement work).
- 3.7 Due to the challenges in terms of capacity, the percentage of decisions made according to the statutory timetable for this period reduced to 91.25%, compared with 97.5% reported to you in September 2021 (namely Quarter 1. Temporary arrangements are in place in an attempt to address the lack of capacity, but I continue to be eager for the Department to look at long-term plans.
- 3.8 The average time taken to process a 'Naming and numbering houses/streets' application has reduced substantially, and takes 7 days on average during this period, compared with 8 days in Quarter 1 2021/22, and 21 days on average during 2020/21. This is as a result of improvements to the system and in the speed of the consultation responses of the Royal Mail in confirming the registration.

Public Protection Service

- 3.9 As a result of this service's efforts to respond to the pandemic, the work of measuring the **percentage of customers who responded to a survey and said that they were pleased with the service level** has not been undertaken recently. Normally, this work is undertaken via telephone calls, but discussions are continuing with the providers of the Service's back office system so that the questionnaires are automatically facilitated via the system.
- 3.10 The Council's food hygiene and standards inspections have recommenced since 1 September 2021, with priority given to new businesses and high-risk businesses initially, in accordance with the guidance in the Food Standards Agency's Recovery Plan. Welsh Councils have agreed with the Food Standards Agency that they would strive to follow their food safety recovery plan, as the demand on public protection services in relation to Covid work reduces over time.

- 3.11 On 1/10/21, 2132 food businesses in Gwynedd were subject to the food hygiene scoring system. Of these, 2117 met the satisfactory or higher food hygiene standard (99.3%) and 15 did not meet the standards (0.7%). It should be noted that the food hygiene inspections programme has basically been suspended since March 2020 until September this year, which has led to a backlog of inspections that have not been undertaken.
- 3.12 Since the inspections programme recommenced at the start of September 2021, ¼ of the team are now focusing on food safety work, whilst 3.5 FTE officers continue to focus entirely on Covid work. Of the 1679 late / accumulated food hygiene inspections, 137 inspections have been completed, and of the 826 late / accumulated food standards inspection, 157 inspections have been completed.
- 3.13 A reduction was seen in **the average time taken to process an application for a taxi licence** from 15 days in Quarter 1 2020/21 to 7 or 8 days during this period. This is as a result of numerous reasons, including a reduction in the delay that used to occur when individuals attempted to obtain a medical examination certificate, DBS disclosures and certificates. There is a long-term sickness absence at the Licensing Unit, at a time when the taxi licensing renewal cycle is about to commence, and so I have asked the Department to monitor the situation.

Network Management Service

- 3.14 The Service is responsible for implementing the parking enforcement arrangements across the County and the increase in visitors that decided to remain in Britain instead of venturing abroad on holiday escalated all the problems in terms of the lack of parking spaces across the County; there is a lack of additional powers to deal with vehicles that create an obstruction and control of motor homes. Since the beginning of 2021/22, the service has employed three additional temporary officers to support the team through an unusually busy time. The measure for parking relates to **the number of appeals to the independent adjudicators that were approved**. I am pleased to report that the number of such appeals has reduced over the past years, and I confirm that three cases have reached this point during 2021/22 to date, with the outcome of two in favour of the Council. Two cases were received during 2019/20, with one in favour of the Council.
- 3.15 As the number of vehicles on our roads increases, it is essential that suitable and appropriate measures are present and are monitored regularly in order to control traffic flow and keep the network as safe and obstruction-free as possible. Traffic prohibitions and restrictions relating to parking, speed, one-way arrangements, weight restrictions and clearways are covered by official and legal orders. We appreciate that the principle behind painting yellow lines on the highway sounds like a simple enough task without any complications, but in reality, many factors can influence and create delay in the process and in some circumstances an order has taken up to 12 months to become operational. Any application needs to be taken through a statutory consultation period of 28 days and the traffic service needs to give due attention to any objection. Further delay has occurred during this period as a result of workload or lack of resources in the Legal Department.

Transport and Road Safety Service

- 3.16 The pandemic recovery period has posed additional challenges to the public transport services and bus companies, with the need to keep to the restrictions on the numbers who can travel on a bus, and the need to keep windows open and wear a face covering. During the period reported upon, the comments received in terms of the satisfaction of public transport users highlights matters relating to a lack of service on

specific routes, and this due to a lack of drivers or a commercial service coming to an end. The Department is working with Public Transport providers as well as other bodies to try to respond to any concern or obstruction arising, for example, by arranging an on-demand service or establishing a new service.

Countryside Service

3.17 Work is continuing to develop measures for the Access and Biodiversity work fields. In order to steer the Service's work for the next years, the following strategic documents are being prepared:

- Right of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) - the Scrutiny Committee on 4 November received a final draft for public consultation.
- Nature Recovery Plan - there is an expectation that public bodies prepare a Nature Recovery Plan in response to loss of habitats and biodiversity and the steps they can take to prevent further decline and recover the situation. The plan will be completed during 2022.

3.18 The Service experienced pressures from many directions during 2021.

- The increase in the number of Planning applications during the summer of 2021 placed additional pressures on the Biodiversity team. It is necessary for officers to provide observations on the impact of developments on protected biodiversity and species. As well as the number of applications, many complex and contentious applications were seen. The following steps were taken to reduce the pressures:
 - i. a temporary arrangement had been established with experienced companies for them to prepare comments on some planning applications.
 - ii. The Department's underspend will be used to employ a temporary biodiversity officer.
- The impact of the above steps will be monitored over the coming months.

3.19 The availability of grants towards the work fields of the Service has increased during 2021, mainly from Welsh Government. For example, for the 20/21 and 21/22 years, almost £400k was received to improve the rights of way network and a similar amount to upgrade the Lonydd Glas with £130k from the Local Places for Nature programme. The presumption is that the grants will continue for the coming years, which raises a question about the Service's current capacity to take advantage of and make the best use of the grants, considering that rights of way officers are also responding to day-to-day matters. The Department has submitted a bid to the Transformation Fund for funding to support the "Project Officer" post to be responsible for the development, administration and implementation of grant programmes.

3.20 **Climate change** - there is a close relationships between the work of preparing the Climate Change Plan and duties in the Biodiversity field, particularly when considering the contribution of woodlands and other Council lands to absorb carbon. Nevertheless, it was obvious that this information was not available and that there was a need to move to measure the values of Council lands and how they can be better managed. In order to meet this challenge, the Department has submitted a bid to the Transformation fund for an officer within the Biodiversity team.

Tracing Service

3.21 The staff recruitment process has been challenging. This is specifically because the service is coordinated on a regional/national level and is being hosted by another authority, which means that the TTP Service in Gwynedd does not have full control over the recruitment campaign. This situation has left the service vulnerable in terms of having a sufficient number of staff to respond to the crisis. Following recent discussions with the host authority here in the North, Gwynedd Council has now escalated its role and takes a prominent part in the process. We are also continuing to receive support from officers from other Council Departments that have transferred to the service on a temporary basis. The service is developing regularly, and is getting more digital that will, ultimately, mean that there will be a need for fewer staff resources to run.

4. FINANCIAL / SAVINGS SITUATION - REMAINS THE SAME

4.1 The Environment Department underspent £100k at the end of the 2020/21 financial year. A detailed review of the department's financial situation will be held as part of the end of November revenue review for the entire Council, this will be reported to the Cabinet in due course. No material issues are anticipated to be reported at present.

4.2 The department has three savings schemes for 2021/22 as well as two additional schemes that are continuing from previous years due to a delay. These have currently been realised or are on track to be realised by the end of the financial year.

4.3 I hope to be able to confirm that these schemes are moving ahead in my next report.

Views of the statutory officers

The Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

Head of Finance Department:

I can confirm that the information set out in Part 4 of the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation. A review of the revenue budget to the end of November together with the savings position will be reported to Cabinet on 18 January.

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

Date of discussion at the Cabinet	Items to be discussed	Cabinet Member
Quarter 4 2021/22 1 January – 31 March		
18 January	Education Department Performance Report	Cllr. Cemlyn Williams
	Finance Department Performance Report	Cllr. Ioan Thomas
	Revenue Budget 2021/22 - End of November 2021 Review	Cllr. Ioan Thomas
	Capital Budget 2021/22 - End of November 2021 Review	Cllr. Ioan Thomas
	Savings Overview - Progress Report on realising Savings Schemes	Cllr. Ioan Thomas
15 February	Economy and Community Department Performance Report	Cllr. Gareth Thomas
	Corporate Support Department Performance Report	Cllr. Nia Jeffreys
	Council Plan Review 2022/23	Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn
	Legislation and Planning Policy for Second Homes and Short-term Holiday Lets	Cllr. Gareth Griffith
	Welsh Communities Housing Scheme	Cllr. Craig ab Iago
	2022/23 Budget	Cllr. Ioan Thomas

Date of discussion at the Cabinet	Items to be discussed	Cabinet Member
	Capital Strategy 2022/23 (includes Investment and Borrowing Strategies)	Cllr. Ioan Thomas
	The Cabinet's forward programme	Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn
8 March	Impact of Covid on the 2022/23 Budget of Byw'n Iach Company	Cllr. Ioan Thomas and Cllr. Gareth Thomas
29 March	Corporate Parent Panel Annual Report	Cllr. Dilwyn Morgan
	Strategic Safeguarding Panel's Annual Report	Cllr. Dilwyn Morgan
April 2022 only *End of current Council on 30/04/2021		
19 April		