

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 10/03/22

Present:

Councillors: Stephen Churchman, Glyn Daniels, Elwyn Edwards, Annwen Hughes, Aled Wyn Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones (Chair), Elwyn Jones, Dafydd Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Elfed Roberts, Linda Morgan, Angela Russell and Owain Williams

Officers: Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Advisor) and Ffion Jones (Democratic Services Officer).

Present for item 5:

Councillor Gareth Griffith (Cabinet Member for the Environment), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment), Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment) and Ceri Hughes Thomas (Parking and Street Works Manager).

Present for item 6:

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Council Leader), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department) and Bethan Richardson (Climate Change Programme Manager).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Kevin Morris Jones, Mike Stevens and Gethin Glyn Williams.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None to note.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held on 13 January 2022 as a true record.

5. UPDATE - PARKING REVIEW

An update was presented by the Head of the Environment Department on the progress to date on the Task Group recommendations. The committee was reminded that the Task Group was established in July 2019 to undertake a comprehensive review of the current operational parking strategy and consider its suitability and relevance to the Council's requirements and the requirements of its communities today. It was explained that reviewing the parking arrangements across the County was also inevitable in terms of financial sustainability and the authority's budgets to ensure that our practical management arrangements are

effective and efficient. It was added that a comprehensive report was submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Committee in December 2020, proposing innovative and appropriate recommendations for solving some of the issues relating to parking. A final report was presented to the Cabinet in February 2021, and the following was approved:

- Adopt a new Parking Fees Structure that will ensure consistency across the County
- Review the parking proposal over the Christmas period
- No changes to the Blue Badge Scheme
- No changes to the Resident Parking Scheme
- Strengthen the Parking Enforcement Team

It was confirmed that these recommendations had been implemented.

As a result of the pandemic restrictions, it was recognised that a number of issues had a considerable impact on the County's communities in the context of parking. A further update was given on the work undertaken to respond to two specific areas, namely management of motorhomes and powers to deal with motorists who park illegally.

In the context of motorhomes, it was explained, in response to a number of complaints about motorhomes parking in unsuitable locations and the lack of control over these vehicles in the County, that extensive work had been undertaken jointly with the Economy Department to try and identify the implications of the increase in motorhome use (due to overseas travel restrictions) and the impact within the County. Caravan site operators in Gwynedd, the motorhome sector as well as the public and communities across the County were consulted via a questionnaire and it was reported that the response had been very positive and highlighted the need for measures to better manage the motorhome sector in the County.

Following the decision made by Cabinet in November 2021, a pilot scheme to develop parking spaces for motorhomes in the Council's car parks was adopted to encourage the use of town centres and reduce the density of motorhomes who use unsuitable parking places. It was added that a Project Board had been established to proceed with the work and planning applications would need to be submitted to adapt the car parks in question.

It was explained that in the context of adopting powers to tow vehicles away, that the system had come into force as a result of parking problems across the County, particularly in the Llyn Ogwen and Pen y Pas areas. It was considered that a fine of £35 was not a sufficient deterrent, and therefore a scheme to remove vehicles was implemented if they did not conform to the parking requirements. Although the plan had been developed with the cooperation of the Police, it was reported that the Council now had powers to act and were collaborating with Gwalia Garage, Caeathro. It was noted that it was intended to present an update on the system as the scheme matured.

Thanks were expressed for the report.

During the discussion, the following observations were submitted by members:-

- The response to the parking problems was to be welcomed.
- That offering a provision in Council car parks created competition with the County's caravan sites.

- Need to consider the proximity of the car parks to homes.
- The car parks would not be supervised - this could lead to antisocial behaviour.
- Who would dispose of waste and sewage?
- How was it possible to differentiate between overnight parking and overnight camping? The difference had to be highlighted if restrictions were to be implemented.
- Would lorry drivers (who have to take a rest break) be controlled in the same way? This could cause problems to hauliers who provide produce to local businesses.
- A clear definition was required for motorhomes, camper vans and folding campers.
- Wales appeared to be an 'unfriendly' country to motorhome users.
- Space had to be made for motorhomes.
- There was a suggestion that some motorhome owners avoid paying for a pitch on purposeful caravan sites although there was space for them.
- Gwynedd is a fairly sizeable County and therefore the parking requirements of each community were different - it was difficult to get arrangements that suit every area.
- Request to re-mark car parks as some bays were too narrow for cars.
- Suggestion to reduce the number of bus bays in car parks - this would release more space for cars.
- Complex signage - some offered a 24 hour ticket but there was a different sign stating no overnight stays.
- Llandanwg Car Park required attention - bay lines were unclear, signs worn and fading.
- Several good matters had been implemented as a result of the review.
- Enforcement arrangements were required as part of the pilot plan.

In response to a comment that a fine of £35 was insufficient to prevent illegal car parking, it was noted that fines were set nationally, however, enquiries had been made regarding the use of different fines as a means of improving compliance. It was reported, e.g., that the towing scheme, collaboration with the Trunkroads Department and introducing double yellow lines in the Ogwen area had improved the situation on the Gwynedd side, however, Conwy had not adopted parking restrictions. It was added that it was too early to measure the success of the towing scheme, however, better compliance had been seen already.

In response to the observations about motorhomes, it was noted that it would be possible to share completed research with the members. It was accepted that car parking locations needed to be considered carefully and the suitability of the site was important. It was added that matters such as the impact on amenities, visual and flooding impacts would be considered and every application would have to go through the planning process. It was also noted that a pilot scheme would be a means to see and evidence what was acceptable.

In response to a question regarding the need for pay and display machines to accept cards and cash across the County, it was noted that there had been issues with some machines that only accepted cards due to a lack of signal, however, every car park offered payment by mobile phone. It was added that a payment (via an app) by phone offered considerable benefits and had been extremely successful. It was noted that the provision would improve, by upgrading the payment machines to include a facility to take card payments.

In response to a comment regarding a request by a member of the public (via the

Council's Vice-chair) for the Council to consider presenting short periods for visitors to Hafan Iechyd or allocate specific bays within the car park, it was noted that the matter was receiving attention and direct discussion had been undertaken with the enquirer.

In response to an observation regarding a request for enforcement officers to use discretion when imposing a fine by encouraging drivers to 'move on' or 'avoid over-staying', it was noted that some parking situations were difficult to manage, however, the parking restrictions had been set for all - local or otherwise. It was added that the officers considered some discretion when unloading, loading and general road safety, and that income creation was not the main driver here. The priority was to keep roads safe and to be consistent and fair to all. It was noted that enforcement work most often occurred during the day, but was later on at some car parks where there was 24 hour parking. There was a need to ensure officers' safety.

In response to an observation, in the context of electric charging points, it was noted that capital funding had been earmarked and grants had been received to fund the installation of electric charging points. It was explained that there had been a delay as a result of the pandemic and infrastructure matters, e.g. the need for an electricity sub-station in Dolgellau. It was noted that the work of installing the provision would be implemented during next year.

In response to a comment regarding preventing motorhomes from parking overnight in lay-bys and the need to install signage to highlight this, it was noted that the matter was complex as there were several bye-laws to be considered if the matter was to be resolved. It was added that the Service had considered legal counsel. It was emphasised that there would be no short-term solution.

RESOLVED

To accept the update, noting the observations received.

6. CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCY PLAN

An update was presented by the Council Leader reporting on what the Council was doing in response to climate change and nature challenges and other practical steps the Council could implement in the future.

It was reported that the Cabinet had adopted the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan (compiled by a task force established by the Cabinet - Climate Change Board) on 8 March 2022. It was noted that the Climate Change Board included Cabinet Members and Chief Officers and more recently the Biodiversity Champion and a representative from the Communities Scrutiny Committee had been invited to be standing members of the Board.

It was explained that the Emergency Plan was led by the Head of the Environment Department, however, there was a responsibility on every Council department to implement the plan together with contributions from the County's communities. It was highlighted that a comment had been made that there was no reference to Pension Fund investments, and a response had been received from the Head of the Finance Department noting that significant steps had been made in the investment field although the Fund had no direct control of the investment.

It was noted that the challenge was to attain a net zero target by 2030. It was accepted that there were challenging steps to be undertaken, however, the Council was determined to reach the target set by the Welsh Government. The Environment Department Head highlighted that the plan was a document that was being developed and adapted regularly and it was noted that there were two phases to the plan: Phase 1 was the current plan that included establishing an appropriate procedure and the steps the Council proposes to take to change the services it provides directly. Phase 2 will be presented following a consultation process and will include more information about the Council's intention to advise and support activities in the community on issues, e.g. buildings and energy, land use and management, recycling, flood zones.

Thanks were expressed for the report and the Board was thanked for extending the membership. It was proposed that consideration should be given to inviting Arfon and Dwyfor-Meirionnydd representatives from the Welsh Youth Parliament to be members of the Climate Change Board. The Leader noted that he would present the proposal to the Board.

During the discussion, the following observations were submitted by members:-

- There was an opportunity for Gwynedd Council to lead the way by influencing and delivering the plan effectively.
- There was a need to encourage the third sector and the private sector to consider similar adaptations.
- It would be beneficial to have a cost and benefit analysis to demonstrate how much money could be saved alongside with the reduction in carbon emissions. By noting a close percentage in terms of impact it would be possible to encourage the third sector and private individuals.
- It was possible to identify buildings where a ground heating system could be introduced.
- Would consideration be given to investment in solar hot water systems together with investing in PV (Photovoltaic) systems to reduce carbon footprint?
- There was a need to undertake a survey based on carbon from buildings and vehicles.
- There was a need to consider alternative technology, e.g. nuclear, hydrogen. Germany invests in renewable hydrogen projects, generated by water.

In response to a question regarding electricity and the source of the electricity supply, considering the existing fuel crisis and the impact of the War in Ukraine, and what is the Council's stance regarding using nuclear energy (green), it was noted that discussions were undertaken with external bodies regarding the site of the Trawsfynydd power-station and the possibility of seeing a development that would provide electricity there. It was added that renewable energy schemes such as water and the sea should be considered, however, a substantial boost was required from the Government to lead on this. Despite the desire to see Gwynedd adopting new technology and benefiting from resources and the experience that already exists in Trawsfynydd and Bangor University, the Welsh and Westminster Governments would make the final decision regarding this. In response by a Member to the comment regarding nuclear energy, the need was noted to consider the hazards of nuclear technology for future generations and the need for care when considering suitable locations for nuclear stations.

In response to using hydrogen, it was highlighted that there were exciting plans

involving transportation in the North which were a part of the Growth Deal with ideas within the hydrogen field, that will be key in the future, being discussed in the Economic Ambition Board.

In response to a question if financial support would be available for communities to adapt buildings, purchase new environmentally-friendly equipment, etc., it was accepted that the existing financial pressure was a concern, however, the intention was that the Council, during phase two of the plan, had a consultative role of raising awareness, giving advice to communities, sharing information about possible grants or referring to other agencies that offer support.

The observations were appreciated. It was noted that the Board was open to all ideas and suggestions, however, the challenge was to interpret all the information available and to discuss with the communities that wish to act. Accepting the desire to save money when delivering some of the plans, it was anticipated that the Emergency Plan would have costs - as a result it was expressed that £3m had been earmarked for this.

RESOLVED

- **To accept the report and note the observations received.**

The Chair took the opportunity to thank all the members for their hard work and to the officers for their support. Best wishes were extended to those Elected Members who were retiring and they were thanked for their valuable contributions to the Council. Best wishes were also extended to those Members returning to the Council and to those standing for election.

The meeting commenced at Time Not Specified and concluded at Time Not Specified

CHAIRMAN