

# Complete Agenda

# CABINET

## CYNGOR GWYNEDD

<b>DATE</b>	Tuesday, 13th December, 2022
<b>TIME</b>	1.00 pm
<b>LOCATION</b>	Hybrid Meeting - Siambr Hywel Dda, Council Offices, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 1SH and on Zoom
<b>CONTACT POINT</b>	Sioned Mai Jones 01286 679665 cabinet@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

### GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET MEMBERS

<b>Members</b>	
Dyfrig Siencyn	Leader of the Council
Nia Wyn Jeffreys	Deputy Leader
Craig ab Iago	Cabinet Member for Housing
Beca Brown	Cabinet Member for Education
Berwyn Parry Jones	Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal and YGC
Dafydd Meurig	Cabinet Member for Environment
Dilwyn Morgan	Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Elin Walker Jones	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Ioan Thomas	Cabinet Member for Finance
Menna Jones	Cabinet Member for Corporate Support

## AGENDA

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Submitted by</b>	<b>Officer</b>	<b>Page</b>
1	APOLOGIES			
2	DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST			
3	URGENT ITEMS			
4	MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY			
5	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2022			3 - 11
6	PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT	Cllr. Dafydd Meurig	Dafydd Wyn Williams	12 - 19
7	PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, MUNICIPAL AND GWYNEDD CONSULTANCY DEPARTMENT	Cllr. Berwyn Parry Jones	Steffan Jones	20 - 30

**THE CABINET 25/10/22**

---

**Present -**

Councillors: Nia Jeffreys, Craig ab Iago, Berwyn Parry Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Menna Jones, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan and Ioan Thomas.

**Also present-**

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance Department), Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Huw Dylan Owen (Corporate Director) and Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader).

Item 6: Meinir Griffith (Service Improvement Officer) and Carey Cartwright (Learning and Development Service Manager).

Item 7: Catrin Thomas (Assistant Head of Supporting Families) and Edward Bleddyn Jones (Taxation Manager).

Items 8-10: Ffion Madog Evans (Senior Finance Manager)

**1. APOLOGIES**

An apology was received from Councillors Dyfrig Siencyn and Beca Brown.

Cabinet Members and Officers were welcomed to the meeting.

**2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

A declaration of interest was received from Cllr Nia Jeffreys in item 7, however it was not a prejudicial interest and she did not need to withdraw from the meeting.

**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 27 SEPTEMBER 2022**

It was noted that the minutes had been noted in the following agenda, therefore, they would be accepted at the next meeting.

**6. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2021-22**

The report was submitted by Cllr Menna Jones.

## DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

## DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that it was an annual report on complaints and service improvement. It was explained that arrangements had been in place in order to report on the work of the service every six months, but that circumstances over the past years had varied the timing. It was noted that arrangements were now in place for the service to return to submitting reports every six months.

It was expressed that the Service Improvement policy had been updated back in April 2021, and that it complied with the plans of the Welsh Government and the Ombudsman's guidelines. It was highlighted when the policy was updated that the service had moved to the Learning and Development Service within the Corporate Support Department. It was explained that the report provided an overview of the team's work and it was highlighted that the number of complaints had increased substantially this year compared to the last year, but that this was to be seen across Local Government and was not unique to Gwynedd. Attention was drawn to the fact that the number of complaints that reached the Ombudsman had also increased.

It was noted that the figures received from the Ombudsman had been highlighted as realistic and that the Gwynedd complaints procedure worked and that lessons were learnt from every complaint. It was noted that the Service continued to work with the departments in order to change mindsets. It was explained that the majority of departments were prepared and happy to accept complaints, but that changing culture across the Council would take time. It was highlighted that training in the Customer Care field had been held with the Ombudsman and that training on responding to correspondence was on the way.

Attention was drawn to the Successes Wall and gratitude were expressed for the comments as they often raised the morale of staff.

### Observations arising from the discussion

- It was highlighted that the number of complaints to the Adults department had increased substantially but that the report noted that the department dealt with them within seven days and the staff were thanked for responding within the timetable.
- Gratitude was expressed for the report and pride was expressed as the Council was using complaints as a way to improve service.
- It was noted that a table within the report reflected the fact that a number of complaints were about the lack of response and action and that some departments had received over 10 complaints within this category. It was noted that work was being done with these departments and it was highlighted in the Housing and Property Department that 10 complaints had been presented in 2021/22 for the

lack of response and that the first six months of this year highlighted one complaint for the same reasons. It was highlighted that the work being done in the background was coming to fruition and that this year's statistics were incredibly favourable. coming to fruition and that this year's statistics were incredibly favourable.

## **7. DISCRETIONARY COST OF LIVING SUPPORT SCHEME**

The report was submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas.

### **DECISION**

The Discretionary Cost of Living Support Scheme was adopted.

### **DISCUSSION**

The report was submitted, noting that the purpose of this report was to receive approval to the Council's Discretionary Scheme to assist with the costs of living. It was explained that this was a scheme that had been developed jointly between the Taxation Service and Supporting Families Team.

It was expressed that the Discretionary Scheme was a follow-up of the Core Plan, where the Council had already distributed £150 each to approximately 40,000 households in Gwynedd. It was noted that the households needed to live in properties in Council Tax Bands A to D in order to receive the support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. It was emphasised that this scheme had been successful and that the Council was the quickest Authority in Wales to achieve this work.

It was explained that the Welsh Government had earmarked £25m to provide discretionary support for other purposes relating to the costs of living, and it was explained that this scheme highlighted the Council's proposals on how to use Cyngor Gwynedd's proportion of the money. First of all, it was noted that a £150 payment to households that were not eligible to receive a payment under the original scheme would receive a Council Tax exception. It was highlighted that property that received a Council Tax exception on 15 February was not eligible to receive a payment, and in addition, the proposal would give a payment to households where the household income was restricted since only one person lived there.

It was emphasised that the second part of the proposed support provided a financial contribution towards the Supporting People Hubs Network. It is believed that giving the network a contribution is a very effective way of securing support to households that need support with their costs of living. It was expressed that the cabinet member believed that this scheme was an effective and efficient way of making use of this additional grant, targeting the money towards the neediest households in the county. It was noted that this money was to be welcomed, despite the fact that it was far from sufficient to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families in the county.

Observations arising from the discussion

- Gratitude was expressed for the report and for the work done within the field. An enquiry was made about plans to support people in specific catchment areas but, e.g. in Bangor, Maesgeirchen was noted but not the rest of Bangor. It was asked whether work would be done outside these areas. It was expressed that hubs would be established in deprived locations but that satellite locations would be opened outside the main hubs. It was explained that a support network and events would be seen outside the main hubs also.
- In terms of the support to Food Schemes, a request was made for more details. It was explained that many types of support was given to food schemes; it was noted that grants were available for Food Banks, Foodshare Groups and groups that produced Meals on Wheels or Community Lunch Clubs.
- It was expressed that it was excellent that the Council could assist to arrange money in order to deal with a problem, but it was noted that it was terrible that such discussions and schemes had to be held within the sixth richest country in the world.
- It was noted that this was an emergency plan, and the need to act was swift. Gratitude was expressed to the finance department for ensuring that the money was shared quickly to individuals in need. It was highlighted that this scheme was only one step within a number of steps within the Supporting People Plan.

## **8. REVENUE BUDGET REPORT - END OF AUGUST 2022 REVIEW**

The report was submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas.

### **DECISION**

To accept the report on the end of August 2022 review of the Revenue Budget, and consider the latest financial position regarding the budgets of each department/service.

To note that the financial impact of Covid on some fields continued in 2022/23, although the impact is not as substantial in 2022/23 compared to the last two years, which are a combination of additional costs, income losses and a slippage in the savings programme.

To note that significant overspend is anticipated in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, Education Department, Economy and Community Department, Highways and Municipal Department and the Housing and Property Department this year. The specific reasons that affect departments are detailed in section 5 of the report, but the impact of increased inflation and electricity prices is a particularly prominent factor.

Given the substantial overspend anticipated by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Highways and Municipal Department, the Chief Executive's

intention to convene a meeting with the relevant officers was noted in an attempt to get to the root of the overspend, to ensure that definitive steps are taken in an attempt to bring the situation under control before the end of the financial year, and to report to the Cabinet on the response plan.

Although it was premature to transfer money from funds until the financial position is finalised at the end of the year, it is recommended that the procedure in terms of using funds to fund the financial deficit at the time will be:

- firstly, use School Balances to fund the increase in electricity prices in schools
- secondly, use £4.5 million from the post-Covid recovery arrangements fund established to fund the associated financial challenges that face the Council
- finally, finance the rest from the Financial Strategy Reserve.

## DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the report detailed the latest review of the Council's revenue budget for 2022/23, along with the projections for the end of the financial year. It was expressed that the report had already been submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee and they had been very supportive of the recommendation.

It was noted that the current projections suggested that the Adults, Health and Well-being; Children and Families; Education; Economy and Community; Highways and Municipal and Housing and Property Departments were overspending by the end of the financial year. It was highlighted that the impact of an increase in inflation, particularly the electricity costs above the budget was to be seen most prominently in the Education, Highways and Municipal and Economy and Community departments. It was noted that the rest of the Council's departments were operating within their budget.

It was expressed that the impact of Covid could not be seen as substantial as what had been seen over the past two years, but that additional costs, income losses and slippages on savings schemes continued in some fields. It was highlighted that a delay in realising savings was evident in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department with a value of up to £930k, whilst the Highways and Municipal Department had schemes to the value of £553k.

The main issues facing the departments that were overspending were highlighted individually as follows:

### Adults, Health and Well-being Department

It was expressed that an overspend of £1.9m was anticipated for this year, and that this is as a result of a combination of factors, including a failure to realise savings. It was highlighted that increasing pressure on supported housing and direct payment packages was to be seen in the Older People Services, and staffing costs and a lack of income were problems in Community Care.

### Education Department

It was noted that an overspend of £1.3m was anticipated by the Education

Department as a result of the impact of higher electricity prices for a period of six months from October 2022 onwards to the schools. It was explained that the schools had already benefited from almost a million of energy savings deriving from the pandemic and lockdowns, therefore, it was considered appropriate to use school balances to fund the additional pressure for this year.

#### Byw'n lach

As a result of the pandemic, Byw'n lach received financial support from the Welsh Government's hardship fund to the value of £1.4m in 2021/22 and £2.7m in 2020/21. It was explained that such support was not available for this year, but that the impact of the pandemic continued to disrupt the company's ability to generate an income. It was noted that the Council had confirmed the necessary financial support to maintain services by extending the guarantee period up to the end of 2022/23, which was approximately £842k this year. It was highlighted that higher electricity costs were responsible for the remainder of the overspend.

#### Highways and Municipal Department

It was expressed that the annual trend of overspending in the municipal field continued with the most obvious problems to be seen in the waste and recycling collection field. It was also explained that the department was experiencing difficulties in realising savings to the value of £553k in a number of fields.

#### Housing and Property Department

It was highlighted that the change in legislation relating to Homelessness had led to substantial financial pressures this year. It was added that despite an allocation of £1.5m from the Council's post-Covid arrangements fund having been provided to assist with the situation, a net overspend of £3.2m was anticipated this year.

#### Corporate

It was noted that prudent projections had been made when setting the 2022/23 budget responsible for additional taxation output and contributing to the underspend on Council Tax Reductions, with a reduction in the number of claimants. It was expressed that a recent increase in interest rates meant that the interest receipt projections were £1.1m more favourable.

It is anticipated that use will need to be made of the Council's reserves and School balances to fund the financial deficit of £7.1m that is anticipated for 2022/23. It was explained that by using the specific reserves, general balances will be protected and available to help face the challenges of the future.

#### Observations arising from the discussion

- It was expressed that this report was serious and raised the curtain on the worse reports to come. It was highlighted that it would be an immense challenge to create a budget for next year. It was highlighted that half of the Council's overspend derived from the homelessness field and that this emphasised the crisis that could be seen in the field. It was noted that it was now irresponsible not to consider money from the Council tax premium to fund the expenditure in the homelessness field.
- It was noted that the current situation was a crisis and that no support



would be forthcoming from the Westminster Government. It was emphasised that inequality lay at the root of the homelessness problem. It was explained that in a county where a huge increase in homelessness had been seen, one could also see thousands of second homes.

- It was explained that the increase in homelessness had led to overspending in the department, but that this had been overspending in order to ensure that individuals and families had a roof over their heads and to respond to the situation.
- It was enquired why the impact of inflation could be seen more prominently in departments such as Economy and Community and Education? It was noted that the increase in electricity costs were to be seen in these departments because of locations such as schools, museums, libraries and leisure centres.

## 9. SAVINGS OVERVIEW REPORT - END OF AUGUST 2022 REVIEW

The report was submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas

### DECISION

To accept the information in the report and to note the progress towards realising the savings schemes for 2022/23, 2021/22 and previous years.

It was noted that the impact of Covid-19 had contributed to a slippage in the savings programme, as the Council had prioritised responding to the emergency during the initial period of the crisis.

### DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that the report summarised the Council's savings' situation. It was explained as per the previous report, that the report had been submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee, which was eager to recommend to the Cabinet that the schemes that were not being realised needed to be challenged in detail and that there was a need to ensure a regular review of those schemes that were slipping and refer the schemes to the work programmes of the relevant Scrutiny Committees.

It was expressed that since 2015/16, savings to the value of £35.4m had been approved to be realised during the 2015/16 - 2022/23 period. It was further emphasised that a total of £3.4m of savings had been realised, which was 94% of the required sum over the period. It was explained for the period from 2015/16 to 2020/21 that 97% of the savings schemes had been realised, with schemes from the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and Highways and Municipal Department yet to be achieved.

Attention was drawn to the 2021/22 savings, noting that 65% of the schemes had now been delivered, with delivery problems to be seen in the Highways and

Municipal Department and the Housing and Property Department. It was explained that when preparing the 2022/23 budget, it had to be acknowledged that the situation had changed so much that it had not been possible to deliver the savings schemes that had been planned originally and almost half a million pounds' worth of schemes had been completely removed from the budget. In addition, the delivery profile for schemes to the value of £1.3m had been moved to 2023/24 and therefore, £595k was the value of the residual schemes to be removed from the 2022/23 budget.

Of these schemes for this year, it was noted that 22% of the schemes had already been realised, with 19% now on track to deliver on time. It was highlighted that the departments with the highest value schemes that were yet to be delivered were the Highways and Municipal and Economy and Community Departments.

It was highlighted that realising £33.4m since April 2015 had been incredibly challenging, and that there were delays and delivery risks with some of the remaining schemes. The need to review the schemes by the end of the financial year was emphasised.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that savings to the value of £33.4m which had been realised since 2015/16 highlighted the work that had been done by staff to face and realise the savings within the Council. Staff were thanked for their work.

## 10. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 - END OF AUGUST REVIEW

The report was submitted by Cllr Ioan Thomas

### DECISION

To accept the report on the end of August review (31 August 2020 position) of the capital programme.

The revised financing as presented in part 4 of the report was approved, as follows:

- use of various sources, worth a total of £26,751,000, to fund actual slippages from 2021/22,
- no change in the use of borrowing,
- an increase of £7,396,000 in the use of grants and contributions,
- no change in the use of capital receipts,
- an increase of £2,156,000 in the use of revenue contributions,
- an increase of £13,000 in the use of the capital reserve, and
- an increase of £538,000 in the use of renewal and other reserves.

### DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the report presented the revised capital

programme and sought approval for the relevant financing sources. It was explained that this report had also been submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee and they supported the recommendations.

The main conclusions were highlighted, namely that the Council had definitive plans in place to invest around £79.8m this year, with £21.1m funded through specific grants. It was explained that the impact of recent financial challenges continued on the capital programme, with only 11% of the budget spent up to the end of August this year, compared with 16% over the same period last year and 13% two years ago.

It was noted that £12.1m of proposed expenditure had been re-profiled from 2022/23 to 2023/24 and 2024/25 with the main schemes including, £5.1 million for Schools Schemes, £3.0 million for Flood Prevention Schemes and £1.6 million for the Penygroes Health and Care Hub.

Since the last review, it was expressed that the Council had managed to attract the following grants:

- £1.6 million - Free School Meals Capital Grant.
- £0.9 million - Sustainable Learning Communities Grant - Schools Community Use.
- £0.9 million - Road Safety Capital Grant from the Welsh Government.
- £0.7 million - Wales Voluntary Action Council (WVAC) Grant towards rural schemes.

Observations arising from the discussion

- It was noted that this report was technical which highlighted some good news. Nevertheless, it was noted that the impact of inflation would affect the Council's ability to complete the schemes that were seeing a 30-40% increase in costs. It was explained that the schemes may need to be prioritised in the future.

The meeting commenced at 1pm and concluded at 2:15pm

---

**CHAIRMAN**

## CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET



### Report to a meeting of the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>13 December 2022</b>
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Councillor Dafydd Meurig</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Dafydd Wyn Williams – Head of Environment Department</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for the Environment</b>

---

#### 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.

---

#### 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 to date against the pledges within the 2018-2023 Cyngor Gwynedd Plan; and the position regarding the performance measures.
- 1.2 I would like to remind you that all matters have already been discussed at a meeting between me, the Head and Deputy Head of the Department in November, following the previous performance challenge meeting in September that included the Chief Executive and representatives from the Communities Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 On the whole, I am satisfied with the progress of projects that the Environment Department lead on and contribute to in the Council's Plan, as well as the performance measures for which I am responsible. Although some challenges continue to face some services as a result of the pandemic's after-effects and recruitment challenges, I am confident that the Department has suitable plans to try and address these.
- 1.4 As you are aware, since the previous performance report, operational responsibility for waste and recycling has been transferred to the Environment Department with the financial responsibility to be formally transferred at the end of the financial year. The Environment Department is continuing to familiarise itself with the field, however, it is known that there is substantial overspend in the waste collection and recycling field, and efforts continue to try and address these historical challenges.

## **2. CYNGOR GWYNEDD PLAN PRIORITIES 2018-2023**

The Department leads on two of the improvement priorities in the Council Plan this year, and contribute towards two priorities jointly with other departments. I summarise below what has been achieved so far:

### **2.1 Climate and Nature Emergency Plan**

- 2.1.2 The plan adopted in March this year outlines the steps that will need to be taken when working towards the ambition that "Cyngor Gwynedd will be net-zero carbon and ecologically positive by 2030."
- 2.1.3 Since the previous report, the data about the Council's carbon emissions for 2021/22 have been submitted to the Welsh Government and an analysis report is expected from them this month.
- 2.1.4 Plans for the carbon literacy training programme are proceeding, and an invitation to offer a quotation to provide a training programme has been publicly shared. Applications are currently being processed, with the intention of commissioning in the near future.
- 2.1.5 A joint information session was held with Business Wales in order to give advice and information to some Council contractors who are businesses and maintenance contractors on how to decarbonise their work.
- 2.1.6 The work of pricing many of the projects that contribute to the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan has been completed, with a report submitted to the Council's Climate and Nature Board outlining the financial contribution required from the Council's coffers.
- 2.1.7 Grant applications for external funding sources are also being prepared to support the Council's efforts to reach the challenging net-zero target by 2030.

### **2.2 Public Protection Capacity**

- 2.2.1 The pandemic highlighted the importance of the Public Protection field and the need to ensure future resilience. As part of plans to increase capacity and planning for progression, funding has been secured from the corporate bidding system to fund 3 Public Protection trainee posts for a period of 3 years.
- 2.2.2 Specific recruitment packages have been prepared and the opportunities have been promoted via corporate social media accounts. It is expected that interviews will take place soon, and we aim to appoint trainees to commence in the next few weeks.
- 2.2.3 There is funding in place to introduce Team Leader posts within the current structure and we plan to advertise these posts internally subject to the completion of evaluations.

### **2.3 Second Homes and short-term holiday lets**

- 2.3.1 The Environment Department contributes towards the 'Access to suitable homes' Improvement Priority 4 (Management of the use of housing as holiday homes and second homes). The Department is coordinating and contributing to the Cross-departmental Group, which includes the relevant Cabinet Members and Senior Officers, which has been established to facilitate the Council's efforts in this key field.

- 2.3.2 Specifically, the Department leads on the work of preparing Article 4 direction in order to ensure better management of the three new planning use classes introduced by the Welsh Government in October 2022, namely main home, second home and short-term holiday let.
- 2.3.3 Planning policy officers have been proceeding with the necessary work of preparing a strong evidence base to clearly show that second homes and/or short-term holiday lets have a detrimental effect on an area(s) within Gwynedd, that warrant introducing Article 4 Direction.

## **2.4 Control of Motorhomes**

- 2.4.1 The Department is also contributing to Improvement Priority 1 – Creating a viable and prosperous economy (Sustainable tourism plan) by collaborating with the Economy and Community Department on the 'Aros-fan' project, to pilot a scheme to improve the management of motorhomes in the county.
- 2.4.2 A grant has been secured from the Welsh Government's Brilliant Basics fund to assist to fund the plan that will develop up to six designated sites for motor homes to stay overnight.
- 2.4.3 Preparatory work is proceeding with the intention that planning applications are submitted to put the relevant infrastructure in place by the end of 2022/23, however identifying suitable sites due to planning constraints etc has proven extremely challenging.

## **3. PERFORMANCE**

Below, I outline the main matters that have arisen from the department's performance since the beginning of April 2022. The information does not refer to all services in the department, only to those where I feel the need to bring to your attention.

### **Planning Service**

- 3.1 It is fair to say that there have been staffing challenges in the Development Control and Planning Enforcement field, and there are efforts to get to grips with this. In terms of **the average time taken to determine a planning application**, the performance since April continues to show an improvement since last year. The average time taken over the course of the year to make a decision is 87 days (72% within the statutory time), compared to 103 days last year. Although work continues to try and deal with the backlog of applications in the system, the service is managing to deal with the monthly average of approximately 100 new applications submitted.
- 3.2 There are efforts afoot to continue to improve performance, with the Planning Service cooperating with other relevant departments in the Council where there is input when determining applications. There is an effort to try and reduce the workload, including checking when there is an actual need for input, and improve communication to understand the challenges that exist (e.g. only send consultations when there is an actual need for advice) and communicate regularly to understand the challenges that exist.

- 3.3 Since I last reported on performance to you, there has been a significant effort to close old cases that were open in terms of investigating **alleged cases of breaching planning regulations**. Supportive assistance has commenced to support the work, with 586 applications open at the end of October compared with 741 open at the end of June when I last reported to you. There is also support from Development Control officers when assisting with enforcement work, however, the impact of this on the performance of dealing with planning applications over time will need to be monitored. In addition, there is an effort to fill an empty post in the field, with an advertisement for an Enforcement Officer, and if we are successful with recruitment we are confident that performance will continue to improve.

#### **Joint Planning Policy Service**

- 3.4 The staff of the joint planning policy service offer guidance on planning applications and pre-application enquiries. Generally, the service's performance in **responding to planning application consultations and pre-application advice enquiries**, remains consistent. 263 of the total of 295 responses, namely 89.7%, were presented within the time permitted, which is slightly lower than the average when I reported on performance in July.
- 3.5 It should be noted that priority has been given in the last few months to preparing the Annual Monitoring Report on the performance of the Local Development Plan. This is a statutory report that must be submitted to the Welsh Government by the end of October. This affected the ability of the service to provide responses to planning applications in September, where it was seen that 72% of responses had been provided within the time-schedule, however, by October it was heartening to see that the figure had increased to 95%. It should also be noted that the Service is giving high priority to the work of preparing an evidence base to justify article 4 direction.

#### **Building Control Service**

- 3.6 The Building Control Service ensures that building work satisfies the reasonable health and safety standards for people in or near the county's buildings. While there have been efforts to fill empty posts over the last few months, the **percentage of Building Control applications determined within the statutory period** (5 and 8 weeks, dependent on the nature of the application) **is 93%** for the reporting period. The service is working to improve capacity and continues to monitor the timescales in their regular work allocation meetings.
- 3.7 Although changes are needed to the work flow of the computer system used as well as staff training in order to be able to gather all the required information for reporting fully on the open files within specific time periods, we can report that the Service continues to ensure that **every dangerous structure receives attention** within 24 hours. Although the 19 buildings were made safe on the day of the notification with the backlog of cases that remain open also protected, a number of significantly complex cases continue to take a great deal of the team's time and resources. This is also true of the 25 cases of unauthorised work reported over this period.
- 3.8 It is pleasing to report that **applications for a general service (request for advice/enquiry)** have been dealt with within three days on average, which shows an improvement from the 4 days for processing presented in the previous performance report.

#### **Business Service (Back Office) – Land charges**

- 3.9 The Department's Business Service (Administration) provides searches information to anyone who wishes to purchase property within the county. The searches take more time than we would wish, due to an increase in the demand for the applications service together with the fact that the Council is amongst the first in Wales to transfer to a new computer system that entails short-term challenges. The service has already employed temporary staff to increase capacity.
- 3.10 With 1,911 applications received since the beginning of April, the **time taken on average to process land charges** is 39 days for the period. Generally, I am satisfied that the team is making progress and the processing days are gradually being reduced. However, there are some circumstances that affect the service's performance, for example, of the 349 applications received in October, there was an unexpected case whereby 160 applications were received from a particular company in one day, and this inevitably had an impact on performance.

### **Public Protection Service**

- 3.11 As you are aware, officers from **the Food and Safety Service**, Public Protection Department, played a key role in seeking to control the spread of Covid-19 during the pandemic. Consequently, there has been an impact on the capacity of work units to achieve their usual work programmes. However, now it is evident that the services can resume the programmed work, and there are efforts to increase capacity with funding earmarked for the recruitment of three trainees for a period of three years in order to seek future progression.
- 3.12 Regarding the **percentage of food businesses attaining the food hygiene standards**, the performance has been consistent since April, with 99% of food businesses achieving a score of 3 or higher. At the end of October, there were 2,203 businesses subject to the scoring system, with only 21 not meeting the standard (0.95%). All such properties receive a second visit within 3 months to ensure that standards have improved. However, in accordance with the national food hygiene scoring conditions, a business can only receive a new score following a programmed inspection or by requesting an inspection to re-score.
- 3.13 The Service follows the Food Standards Agency Recovery Plan when conducting **inspections of standards and food hygiene**. In accordance with the plan, all properties in food standards category risk A have received an inspection, with 49% of food standards inspections programmed for the year completed thus far. In order to improve efficiency, officers undertake joint inspections of food hygiene and standards. Since June, officers have focused on undertaking programmes of hygiene inspections in seasonal premises (open during the summer only) that are in the C and D hygiene risk categories, completing any standards inspection required at the same time. With the majority of seasonal businesses closed, officers now prioritise food safety inspections in accordance with their hygiene risk category with the focus mainly on hygiene risk category C.
- 3.14 It is fair to note that **the percentage of food businesses that have received food hygiene inspections** is lower than what we would expect to see for the year, with 36% completed by the end of October. The fact that members of staff have returned to work following long-term absence has increased the service's ability to complete inspections. There are three officers who are also in the process of securing qualifications which means that they can undertake official food interventions once they have qualified, but the capacity of current staff continues to be challenging.



- 3.15 The Food and Safety Service also receives a significant number of **service requests**, with the majority for food hygiene. The requests can vary with some being dealt with immediately, while others take some months to be resolved. Although there is a backlog of requests, officers continue to try and deal with these, the percentage of requests closed since April is 85% from a total of 713 requests received.
- 3.16 **The Trading Standards Service** deals with matters relating to Animal Health and Welfare as well as Consumer Protection. In accordance with the service work programme, there is an expectation to inspect 49 establishments during 2022/23 that have been prioritised at risk level. As noted in the July report, a significant portion of inspections are completed during the autumn and winter seasons when the risk is higher, and by now 59% of the inspections have been undertaken.
- 3.17 Trading Standards received a total of 738 **service requests** during the period since April 2022, which is a combination of requests to the animal welfare and consumer protection fields. 82% of requests received during this period have been dealt with, and there has been good progress also to deal with the backlog of service requests received, which has reduced from 109 in August to 70 by the end of October. In addition, Trading Standards have completed 531 inspections or visits and have recorded 125 cases of non-compliance between April and October, with action taken on each one, which may include advice and guidance, notices or further investigations where required.
- 3.18 **The Pollution Control and Licensing Service**, Public Protection works to ensure that licensable activities in relation to taxis, alcohol, gambling and entertainment are provided in a way that protects the public and supports businesses.
- 3.19 A significant portion of the service's work deals with licensing taxis, with the **average time taken to process an application for a taxi licence** being 11 days during the period in question. Although applications from drivers that need to be referred to a Committee hearing for a decision can significantly affect the processing time, it is encouraging to report that more people are using the electronic self-service system via the Council's website which improves the system's efficiency. Nevertheless, the Revenue and Customs department of Central Government (HMRC) has introduced a mandatory system since April 2022, which means that every taxi driver must register on the HMRC website to record payment of taxes, before an application can be processed to renew a taxi licence. Many taxi drivers have difficulties when doing this, and this may mean a delay in processing applications for licences.
- 3.20 The Pollution and Licensing Service continues to accept a **number of service requests** with 2,312 received since April, and 68% of these are now closed. A significant proportion of these relate to noise, and such complaints can take some time to establish an evidence base before the enquiry can be implemented and closed. This is also a reflection of the backlog of requests that remain open.

#### **Network Management Services**

- 3.21 The work of **the Parking and Street Works Service** is to ensure safe management of the highway. As part of this duty, ten Parking Enforcement Officers operate across the county over 7 days a week, which includes flexible hours beyond normal hours. The service receives regular complaints regarding parking, with a specific indicator measuring the **time taken to respond to complaints about illegal parking**. During the period in question, 114 complaints were received, with staff visiting each site in question within three days of receiving the request, with an average processing time of 1 day for the period.

- 3.22 The other measure for parking relates to **the percentage of successful appeals regarding parking tickets**. Fines are issued for vehicles that park in breach of the on-street and off-street restrictions (car parks). The service deals with everyone in a consistent, fair and transparent manner, and every motorist is entitled to appeal if they feel that any unfairness or error has occurred. Every appeal is considered in full and if robust evidence reinforces the claim that a genuine mistake has occurred, the fine is revoked. From the 1,144 appeals submitted since April, 269 or 24% have been revoked.
- 3.23 Since April, a new measure has also been introduced to the Streetworks field, to monitor the **percentage of works by statutory contractors that has taken longer than the original timetable**. The service's street inspectors are responsible for coordinating and monitoring all activities to avoid situations where areas are disrupted for long periods of time. Of the 2,200 works by contractors (electricity, gas, water companies etc.) since April, 98% were achieved within the original timetable. Although the majority of the activities were achieved within the timetable, it is not uncommon to run over time for a number of various reasons, and the service can set specific conditions to try and control this, and in some circumstances no option is given for contractors to be able to extend the period.
- 3.24 The **Traffic and Projects Service** leads on matters regarding any changes to the highway. Of the 1,129 requests for a service received in the period from April to October, 78% have been closed. The service has faced a period of significant capacity challenges with a high turnover during the Covid period. I see that the service has started to turn a corner with staff in place, and a professional trainee has also joined in recent months which will assist capacity and improve future progression. It has to be accepted that the officers that are new to some posts will continue to train and develop their expertise over the coming months.
- 3.25 The **Public Transport Service** 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. Work is proceeding to ensure that the system to record **service requests** is operational and I anticipate that it will be possible to report on performance in the next report.
- 3.26 There is also an expectation that the service will report on **the percentage of bus services that are on time**. Although the data is not currently available, the tracking system is currently being trialled with the TrawsCymru service, with the technology available on every bus via the tickets machine. In future, it is intended that this technology will be available, by including it in the terms and conditions of the contracts, and will offer more accurate data with no reliance on staff randomly monitoring, as in the past.
- 3.27 The **Countryside Service** (Paths and Biodiversity) intends to commence using a computerised system that has been developed with the Information Technology Service to be able to monitor performance when dealing with **requests for service**. It is intended that the system will be operational from this month onwards and therefore it will be possible to report on performance in the next report.
- 3.28 It is also worth reminding you that the Service has prepared a Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the Council, and the plan that sets a direction and priorities for the field for the next few years was approved at a meeting of the Cabinet on 22 November.

**Views of the statutory officers**

**The Monitoring Officer:**

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

**Head of Finance Department:**

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of the Environment Department.

---

# Agenda Item 7

## CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET



### Report to a meeting of the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>13 December, 2022</b>
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Cllr Berwyn Parry Jones</b>
<b>Liaison Officers:</b>	<b>Steffan Jones, Head of Highways, Municipal and YGC Department</b>
<b>Contact Number:</b>	<b>32402</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE REPORT BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, MUNICIPAL AND GWYNEDD CONSULTANCY DEPARTMENT</b>

---

#### 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.

---

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on what has taken place in the areas within my remit as Cabinet Member for Highways, Municipal and Gwynedd Consultancy.
- 1.2 As you know, changes have been implemented within the Department with the recently announced restructure. As a result, Waste Collection and Treatment Services have moved to the Environment Department and the Gwynedd Consultancy Department has now transferred to this Department.
- 1.3 I wish to note my appreciation for the work of all the officers of the Department and to recognise the key contribution they make during this period of change. Through good collaboration between the departments, Environment, Highways and Gwynedd Consultancy, it is fair to say that there was no negative impact on Gwynedd residents.
- 1.4 By now, the name of the Department needs to take into account the recent changes as the largest element of the Municipal Service, namely the Waste Collection and Treatment Service has been transferred to the Environment Department. Therefore, it is intended to re-name the Department. Following a consultation with staff, the preferred name is the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department, due to the importance of branding in the commercial world, staff felt that it was important to have YGC as part of the Department's name.

- 1.5 This report will outline the latest developments against pledges within the 2018-2023 Cyngor Gwynedd Plan; the progress of performance measures; and the latest in terms of savings and cuts schemes, and how we will respond to the overspend.
- 1.6 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, Municipal and YGC Department's Management Team.
- 1.7 On the whole, I am comfortable with the performance of the measures being reported. The Department is facing considerable work over the next few months, which will include a review of the Street Cleaning Service and also a very detailed look at the budget.

## **Highways, Municipal and YGC**

### **2. 2018-23 Council Plan Projects**

The Department is leading on two of the improvement priorities, which appear in the Council Plan for this year. The two priorities are long-term and essential to the Department's performance. I summarise what has been achieved thus far as follows:

#### **2.1 Clean and Tidy Communities**

- 2.1.1 Following a period of planning, a Project Officer was appointed to establish the teams, to manage them and provide a work programme for them. The Officer is also the day-to-day contact point for Local Members, Community Councils and other stakeholders regarding any work that needs to be undertaken.
- 2.1.2 The teams themselves were subsequently appointed and there are now two teams each in Arfon and Meirionnydd and one team in Dwyfor. The type of work they undertake is as follows:
- dealing with urban weeds and overgrowth
  - cleaning street signs and street names
  - cleaning, repairing and painting street furniture such as benches, bollards etc.
  - cleaning, repairing and installing street bins and dog fouling bins
  - cleaning graffiti, stickers or posters from Council property
  - deep cleaning, namely street cleaning, removing chewing gum etc.
- 2.1.3 These are only examples of the type of minor maintenance work carried out by the teams. It is true to say that the feedback about their work from some of the areas they have already visited has been excellent.

*'Thank you again to the Team for their work so far, it has already made a real difference to the area. I hope that this will continue.'*

*Thank you very much for this. An excellent start to this scheme.'*

*'I write to you as Town Councillor to inform you that I am delighted with your new team.'*

- 2.1.4 The Project Officer has nearly finished drawing up a timetable to allow the teams to visit each Council ward in turn. The timetable will be presented to Local Members and Community Councils in due course. The timetable is expected to include a feature for Local Members to request work via the Members' Portal.
- 2.1.5 The teams are eager to use technology as much as possible to facilitate their work. As a result, they already have a specialist chewing gum removal machine as well as graffiti removing equipment on order. They will soon receive tablets so that they can receive work instructions remotely while in their work area. They currently use diesel vehicles to transport their equipment, materials etc. However, there are plans afoot to replace these with bespoke electric vehicles.

## **2.2 Strengthen Communication and Engagement**

- 2.2.1 The Highways and Municipal Department is very visible where every resident in the County is affected by aspects of the service.
- 2.2.2 This year, emphasis was placed on mapping our processes of dealing with Street Cleaning enquiries/complaints. We have now held meetings with representation from Galw Gwynedd and IT in order to find any gaps.
- 2.2.3 This survey is timely with the restructuring changes and is an opportunity to review other similar services within the Department by discovering if it is possible to integrate them into one Street Scene Service to substantially improve cleanliness, tidiness and safety of the local built environment.
- 2.2.4 Another project that is about to start and linked to this improvement priority is our Mapping Services Project. It is intended to place the Department's different assets on a map where customers will be able to view the status of the asset and report any defect. Our street lamps have been placed on the system and we are now considering placing our salt bins in it to facilitate winter maintenance matters.

## **3. OTHER PROJECTS**

### **3.1 Fleet Strategy**

- 3.1.1 A Green Fleet Plan (2023-39) was drawn up and submitted to the Climate Change and Nature Board on 14 November, 2022. Three steps were noted within this plan to transform the fleet, namely Sorting, Innovation and Renewal.
- 3.1.2 In summary, sorting out must take place to identify the real size of the fleet along with the needs of the services. Once this work is completed, we feel that it is essential to design a vehicle structure, similar to a staff structure, that will be established within each Department. This will prevent managers from keeping vehicles once they have been renewed, and provide some assurance that a sufficient budget is available to renew and maintain the vehicles and to ensure that only essential vehicles to serve Gwynedd residents are in our fleet.

- 3.1.3 We can then proceed to look at how technology or changes in work arrangements can transform the fleet. Some examples of this may include establishing a corporate pool system, establishing a vehicle load procedure and renewing technology to enable the Fleet Service to report on our fuel use.
- 3.1.4 The final step of transforming our fleet will be the formulation of a policy to renew Council vehicles. By establishing a clear policy and direction, we can ensure that the changes being made will benefit the Council in the long-term. The electric, hydrogen and ULEV vehicle market is constantly changing, therefore, we must be open to trial different vehicles and technologies.
- 3.1.5 In considering Welsh Government targets, we must ensure that we set a firm renewal timetable.

#### **4. FAIRBOURNE PROJECT**

- 4.1 As a Department, we are closely collaborating with the 'Fairbourne Moving Forward' Project Group, examining flood risks in light of climate change factors. The 'Fairbourne Moving Forward' Project Board includes representation from the following bodies: Arthog Community Council (Chairing), Gwynedd Local Councillor, Cyngor Gwynedd, Scottish Power, NRW, Community Ambassador, Network Rail, the Health Board, Welsh Water and Eryri National Park.
- 4.2 Natural Resources Wales (NRW) are leading on a Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Plan. NRW are in the process of reviewing the condition of its assets and providing a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) on the way forward.

The work will take at least 18 months to complete (it commenced in October 2022), and gather and evaluate evidence in order to assess the sustainability of management options in Fairbourne and Arthog, considering the priorities of the Flood Risk Management National Policy (communities at risk) alongside broader considerations of coastal adaptation in response to sea level rise, and the conservation priorities for the Mawddach estuary.

The SOC evaluation will validate, or perhaps challenge, the current policies of the SMT for the last two periods, and will determine them in detail in terms of content, timing and presenting methods. Any plans to engage with the community will be developed jointly with the Fairbourne Moving Forward Project Board and include all partners.

- 4.3 Gwynedd is leading on the People and the Built Environment Plan by working cross-departmentally. In partnership with Public Health Wales, work to complete a Health Impact Assessment with the community has commenced since summer this year and is being completed by the Savills company.

This will provide information of the actual position, and extend our ability to support the community. In Fairbourne's case, the aim is to assess the impact of living under the threat of climate change in the short-term and long-term.

The next step will be to prepare and submit an Outline Business Case to the Welsh Government and, depending on its response, to undertake further work to develop a Full Business Case.

- 4.4 An independent study has been drawn up by Dr Graham Hall, which challenges the outcomes reached so far along with the date of 2054. Dr Graham Hall's body of work, along with Project Board reports, will be analysed by the external independent consultant, 'WaterCo', which is completely independent to the work so far.

The review will assess each observation made by Dr Graham Hall in relation to sections of various reports mentioned individually in review sheets. The aim is to provide an evidence-based direction throughout the review document, in order to allow cross-referencing of observations within the general review process. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by the beginning of December, 2022.

## 5. PERFORMANCE

In terms of the Department, I am generally happy with their performance. Nevertheless, I draw your attention to the main issues arising.

- 5.1 **Lighting Service** - The work of changing all Council street lighting (17,811) to LED technology commenced during 2016/2017. We are pleased to report that we have now completed the work of this project on target. As a result of this project, we saw a 50% reduction in our energy use and a 74% reduction in our carbon emissions per tonne at the end of 2021/22.

Any new development will include the LED technology and lighting maintenance work will still exist in accordance with existing guidelines/instructions. In addition to this, in order to ensure that we provide an energy/carbon efficient service, we are also dimming the lights within estates/villages in the county to use 25% less kwh per hour between 10:30pm and 6:00am.

After the end of this work, our electricians will play a great part in installing charging points across the county.

- 5.2 **Highway Maintenance Service** - Following Ffordd Gwynedd's review of the service, a new way of working was introduced on the 1st of April. To date, the arrangements are proving to be working well. It is also encouraging to note that the number of CAT1 defects reported by the public has decreased this year. However, we are yet to see the impact of the Winter season on our assets which may impact the situation.

The work of updating our Highway Asset Maintenance Plan, which reflects the new requirements of the Code of Practice with an emphasis on risk management is almost complete. As part of this work we have reviewed the roadside maintenance procedure. It is also a pleasure to report that the wild flower areas to promote wildlife and nature have been introduced with certain verges along the highway.

In addition to the above, preparation work for the winter season has been completed and in place.



**5.3 Street Services** - There has been considerable pressure on this service since the pandemic, where litter, overflowing bins and dog-fouling problems seem to have increased. We received the results of the independent 'Keep Wales Tidy' 2022/23 survey at the end of July. It is noted within this survey that 141 individual cross-sections were surveyed and grade B or higher was awarded to 95% of these streets, namely streets deemed as having an acceptable level of cleanliness by the public.

In addition to the external surveys, we will work on undertaking regular internal surveys using a digital App. By using this App, a street cleanliness methodology will be used while inputting information during our Highway surveys.

**5.4 Public Toilets Service** - The Council has 66 public toilets in Gwynedd and two have recently reopened at the request of our communities. To date, we have upgraded ten toilets by means of grant schemes and there may be potential to upgrade three other toilets next year via grants namely Llanbedrog, Cricieth and Y Glyn, Llanberis.

It is important to note that there has been pressure on the Service to recruit and appoint in this field and we are still endeavouring to attract staff to these essential posts. The Service is facing several challenges in terms of increased use and anti-social behaviour in some cases that have increased in recent years. In looking to the future, it is intended to examine different income generating methods via new technology with fee charging doors.

**5.5 Street Cleaning** - Recent changes to the organisation, namely the transfer of the Waste Collection and Treatment Services to the Environment Department and the integration of YGC to this Department, has given us an opportunity to review some of our current services, especially those responsible for looking after our public open spaces and ensuring they are clean and tidy.

As well as our recently established Ardal Ni Tidying Teams, there is potential to incorporate the Street Cleaning Service and the Street/Enforcement Services into one Street Scene Service in order to substantially improve the cleanliness, tidiness and safety of the local built environment. Such a step would allow resources and skills to be shared, to reconcile current work practices, to create efficiency savings and potentially save costs.

Work has already commenced to research this with a review of how the Street Cleaning Service completes its work. A similar exercise will be undertaken in other services over the next few months.

**5.6 Ash Dieback** - A team was established to deal specifically with the disease last September. The remit of the team includes conducting surveys of ash trees on Council land and roads, assessing their condition and drawing up a work programme to deal with those who pose a risk to public safety. The team issues private landowners with legal notices if their trees pose a safety risk to users of Council land and they offer advice to all Council departments on general trees matters.

This year, the team has re-examined sites already inspected by specialist contractors to determine if the trees designated as red (high risk) at the time have got worse and also if nearby trees previously designated as amber (moderate risk) have deteriorated. The team has followed a recognised tree risk assessment to deliver this and they have used the results to form a tree felling programme for this financial year.

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 felled.

#### **5.7 YGC - Ymgynghoriaeth Gwynedd Consultancy (YGC) acts as:**

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

#### **5.8 Commercial Work**

5.8.1 The income and structure of the commercial work - The commercial work is achieved by bringing together all of the engineering, technical and scientific expertise and skills to meet the needs of the client by forming project teams. The projects call for expertise in many work fields, because projects are different in nature, and an action plan is being provided for each project. Also, the intention is for each plan to be measured in terms of customer satisfaction.

The four services are:

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

Staff hours are measured as well as the progress of projects against the agreed fee. YGC's financial performance is managed by closely collaborating with finance officers.

Although this year is challenging, a robust work programme is in place, but as usual the balance of work may change during the year.

In terms of financial measures, I am happy with their performance, which is important bearing in mind that a vast majority of YGC officers work on contract awarding work, which brings an income of over £7.35 million to the Council per year.

The work pattern for the first and second quarter follows the same work pattern as last year. The main clients that YGC works for in 2022/23 are:

- Isle of Anglesey County Council
- Housing and Property Department
- Ceredigion County Council
- Welsh Government / North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent
- Environment Department
- Highways Department
- Powys County Council
- Denbighshire County Council

Some of YGC's other clients: -

- Alun Griffiths (Network Rail)
- Cadnant Planning
- UK Highways
- Conwy County Council
- RSPB
- Groundwork Wales
- TACP Architects

- 5.8.2 Environmental and sustainability matters influence all types of developments. The environmental team works on a number of schemes. They conduct environmental assessments on a number of schemes to ensure that natural habitats and species are protected, and provide environmental improvement measures. In addition, the team is taking advantage of opportunities to add elements that increase biodiversity to the schemes.
- 5.8.3 YGC continues to develop local employment through the structure, which are quality jobs. Due to opportunities in the market, YGC added nine posts to the structure last year, with a plan to redesign some functions to correspond with opportunities, but challenges to retain competent staff remain.
- 5.8.4 YGC gives high priority to staff training and is the regional lead on the North Wales Regional Professional Training Agreement on engineering work via the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE). This will enable the officers to develop their skills and to work on more challenging schemes. Also, encouragement and investment is crucial to encourage staff to successfully seek other professional membership, which include the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Chartered Institution of Water and Environment Management (CIWEM). Staff are also aware that professional qualifications are key to attracting and winning work, and this is why such a high percentage of YGC staff are members of professional bodies.
- 5.8.5 Beyond professional qualifications, YGC also invest in academic opportunities by funding requests from staff to attend appropriate courses on the basis of a business case. At present, two staff members are studying degree courses, with three studying other educational course (HNC/BTech).

## **5.9 Undertaking statutory functions relating to water and flood management**

- 5.9.1 Ymgynghoriaeth Gwynedd Consultancy (YGC) operates commercially and also undertakes statutory functions in water and flood management. The Service specialises in identifying and developing flood risk management schemes, which is an essentially important field when considering climate change impacts.
- 5.9.2 During this financial year, the Service has been working on developing a number of flood risk management schemes, including the Viaduct Gardens - Barmouth, North Promenade - Barmouth, Hirael - Bangor, Ogwen Catchment Scheme, Gwyrfai and Clynog Fawr Catchment Scheme. As well as a series of smaller scale schemes in the Bethesda and Pencaenewydd areas.
- 5.9.3. Construction work has commenced on a flood risk and coastal erosion scheme in Porthdinllaen and Aberdyfi Quay, and it is intended to complete both schemes by the end of this financial year.
- 5.9.4. The Service is monitoring the work programme on a monthly basis, and the work of submitting bids for investment from the Welsh Government in the 2023/24 work programme are already in the pipeline. Usually, a water and flood grant condition from the Welsh Government requires a minimum of 15% in match funding from the Council for any construction work. This means that investing Council funding attracts a substantial value in grants to realise schemes and to invest in our infrastructure.
- 5.9.5. Surveys of our coastal and land drainage assets have been completed for the 2022/23 period, since August this year. This enables us to identify the condition of our assets and to programme maintenance work as required. Work to repair some defective assets has been scheduled and the Department continues to monitor the assets in the meantime.
- 5.9.6. There is a duty upon us to investigate flooding incidents under the Flood and Water Management Act. To date, in the 2022/23 financial year, we are aware of 32 properties that have subject to internal flooding. Investigating and recording these incidents is essential to support applications for capital funding in order to develop business cases for flood risk management schemes.
- 5.9.7. Work to approve Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) applications is continuing and the number of applications is increasing, so we have now increased resources within the team. We also provide an advisory service on SuDS applications to the Isle of Anglesey County Council.

## **6. ACCREDITATIONS**

**6.1 Investors In People (IIP) Accreditations** - In 2021, the YGC Service received an "Investors in People" accreditation for the fourth time. The IIP report and action plan will tie into the Service's business plan for 2022/23.

### **6.2 Highways 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. The Department has also got the following accreditations, namely - BSi 14001 - Environment and BSi 9001 - Standard. 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.

## **7. FINANCIAL SITUATION**

### **7.1 Highways and Municipal**

The August revenue review report was submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee on 13/10/22 and then to the Cabinet on 25 October, 2022. The report highlighted an estimated overspend of £1.8m (which includes Waste and Recycling) within the Highways and Municipal Department up to the end of the 2022/23 financial year. £1.2m of the overspend is attributed to waste services. Since September this year, this Service is under the management of the Environment Department and it will be fully transferred by 2023/24.

Therefore, it is estimated that services that remain within the Highways and Municipal Department will overspend by £0.6m. The main problems can be seen within the fields of toilet cleaning, street cleaning and land maintenance. A couple of historical savings schemes continue to be problematic for the Department to realise and this is a factor in the overspend.

The Department is undertaking a review of the following services, street cleansing, public convenience and ground maintenance in order to that they may identify route causes to the projected overspend.

### **7.2 Gwynedd Consultancy**

The August review estimated an underspend of £29,100. The Department has achieved its historical efficiency savings schemes.

The Service anticipated meeting the profit target this year by means of a quality performance. The scheduled work profile is consistent with the previous years' profiles and sufficient work is available by our clients for the rest of the year.

## **8. VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS**

### **The Monitoring Officer:**

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

### **Head of Finance Department:**

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department.