

# GWYNEDD COUNCIL

## REPORT TO A MEETING OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 September, 2017
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Ioan Thomas, Cabinet Member – Economy Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Iwan T. Jones, Corporate Director
<b>Contact Number:</b>	01286 679685
<b>Title of Item:</b>	Economy Development Performance Report

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update you on what has been achieved in the field I am responsible for as the Cabinet Member for Economy Development. This will include outlining the latest and the pledges in the Strategic Plan; where there are performance measures; and the latest in terms of the savings and cuts plan.
- 1.2 I will remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at meetings of the Economy management team, which also included a representation from the scrutiny committee.
- 1.3 As this is a new portfolio for me as a Cabinet Member, over the past months I have been familiarising myself with the work of the Economy and Community Department and got to know the projects/measures the department has in place. I look forward to collaborating with the department over the coming years.
- 1.4 On the whole, I am satisfied with the performance of most projects and measures or that the appropriate steps have been taken in order to improve performance.

## 2. DECISION SOUGHT

2.1 To accept and note the information in the report.

## 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

3.1. In order to ensure effective performance management.

## 4. STRATEGIC PLAN PROJECTS

### 4.1. E2 High Value and Quality Jobs

4.1.1. The purpose of this project is to work pro-actively in order to create the correct conditions to develop high value and quality jobs in Gwynedd.

4.1.2 The project has been focusing on responding and driving the content of the UK Government's Sector Deal for the nuclear sector in order to maximise the benefit for the Trawsfynydd Site. Through these sector deals, the industry is submitting suggestions to the Government on how to respond to challenges within specific sectors. The response has been sent to the Government and we await their response.

4.1.3 Work is underway to develop the £10m-£25m bid for European funding to improve the infrastructure at Llanbedr Aerospace Centre. In addition, a bid for £900,000 has been made for funding from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) for the project. There are risks associated with the project as the nature of the bid is subject to securing very substantial match funding (approximately £18m). We await a response from Welsh Government in terms of their willingness to contribute to this. I will be in a position to elaborate and submit a report to Cabinet on these projects before the end of September.

4.1.4 Since April, **76% of jobs created / safeguarded are high value jobs (over £26k) - Measure ERh6**. I have asked the department for a further analysis of this figure so that it is possible to see in which sectors and areas the progress has been seen. I am eager to further probe some of the matters arising from the analysis during the next round of performance challenging meetings.

### 4.2. E5 Digital Gwynedd

4.2.1 The purpose of the project is to support the efforts made to transform the use made of technology by Gwynedd businesses, services and residents by ensuring that there is a provision of up-to-date broadband across the county.

4.2.2 The project is continuing to collaborate with Welsh Government / BT to deliver the Superfast Wales project in the county. By now: **82% of homes and businesses can receive superfast broadband in the county (Measure ERh6)**, with the number of subscribers at 42%, namely the highest in Wales.

### 4.3. E6 Rural Gwynedd Innovation Scheme

4.3.1 The purpose of this project is to create the conditions to strengthen Gwynedd's rural economy and encourage local enterprises to establish and develop in order to maintain employment. This will be achieved through Gwynedd Rural Innovation - Rural Development Programme LEADER.

- 4.3.2 Seven small innovative projects have been approved under the Innovate fund since April. All of these projects are interesting and vary from plans to trial the use of electricity in the home, to projects trialling a new method of introducing language and culture to visitors to Gwynedd through artistic performances. I feel that the scope to trial new ideas under this fund is an exciting prospect and gives our rural communities an opportunity to consider a range of different activities. I will share case studies with you in my next report.
- 4.3.3 This scheme is also in the process of developing a bid to provide community Wi-Fi in the County. I am interested to see how this bid develops, particularly following a successful trial in Aberdaron.

#### **4.4. E7 World Heritage Site**

- 4.4.1 The purpose of this project will be to create an economic benefit of Gwynedd's rich heritage. We will focus on the existing Castles of Edward I World Heritage Sites at Harlech and Caernarfon and will submit a case for World Heritage Site status for the heritage of the slate industry.
- 4.4.2 Work has commenced on the implementation of a programme of £15m improvements to develop Caernarfon Waterfront as an asset for the entire County. This work includes an extension to Galeri, the development of Slate Quay and improvements to the Welsh Highland Railway station. I feel that this is an exciting development for the area, and I intend to update you regularly on this work as it develops.
- 4.4.3 It is fair to say that the work in Harlech has been slower. I have asked the Department to work closely with the community in order to respond to the opportunities and needs arising there. The project has appointed consultants to draw up a vision and prioritise the opportunities for Harlech, so I will be monitoring these developments.
- 4.4.4 In terms of the nomination for World Heritage Site status, we have received a response from the Westminster Government following a technical appraisal submitted in March 2017. The feedback was generally positive, and they are encouraging us to continue to develop the nomination, and to aim towards September 2018. However, strong recommendations were made for us to consider the boundaries of the nomination, in particular in the context of the working quarries. The project's Steering Group will meet at the end of September to discuss the next steps.

#### **4.5. T7 High-profile and strategic events**

- 4.5.1 The purpose of this project is to attract nationally or internationally high-profile events to Gwynedd in order to take advantage of the economic and social benefit which will ensue.
- 4.5.2 The project has been working closely with a number of events recently, including the Hi Jinx Festival in Caernarfon, ensuring a platform for the young artists of the area for Festival No.6 and Red Bull Hardline.
- 4.5.3 In addition, discussions have taken place with three communities along with the Education Department and the Leisure Service to create opportunities for young people during the Commonwealth Baton's visit to Gwynedd in September. I am

eager to ensure that giving young people opportunities to benefit from events is at the core of this project.

- 4.5.4 It was disappointing to hear that Ground Event had to cancel Gŵyl Eryri in Bala due to a lack of ticket sales. I am eager to have a further discussion with the department about this, to identify whether or not we could have done something differently.

## 5. MEASURING PERFORMANCE

- 5.1. **Appendix 1** reports on the performance measures that are associated with my portfolio. I have already referred to some of these measures whilst discussing the above projects.
- 5.2 The department has been working on a number of new measures to coincide with the purposes of their services, and has been considering more meaningful measures for the residents of Gwynedd. These measures are included in **Appendix 1**. Although good work has been done to consider meaningful new measures, I feel that further work is to be done to analyse the figures submitted further, and use this information to shape and change the direction of the services provided.
- 5.3 It is now a reality that less public money is available, and with the impact of Brexit, it is expected that grants for economy development will reduce. Therefore, we must bear this in mind when comparing the trends over the years.
- 5.4 The **Economic Development Programmes Service** draws up and implements strategic plans and projects that will transform the business environment in Gwynedd. The service is responsible for implementing many of the projects I have elaborated upon in section 4. One of the main outcomes that this service will achieve during the coming months is the drawing up of a new Economic Strategy for the County.
- 5.5. The **Business Support Service** provides information, advice and support to businesses so that they can establish, be competitive and develop in Gwynedd. One of the main matters I wish to raise here is that the **percentage of industrial space and Council offices that are full is 91%** by now. This means that there is no room for businesses to start-up here anymore, and only a few empty units are available in Mentec and InTec. This is an issue that requires further attention if we wish to encourage people, in particular young people, to start their own business. I am eager for the department to use other potential units in order to have business start-up units in the centre of our towns / villages.
- 5.6 I feel that the Unit has further work to do to capture the experiences of the businesses they work with, and possibly this is something that should be considered across the Council. Having one contact point in the Council for Gwynedd businesses is also a matter that I have asked the service to consider.
- 5.7 The **Maritime and Country Parks Service** seeks to ensure safe and quality resources in our country parks, harbours, marinas and on Gwynedd beaches. The unit is responsible for managing 301km of the Gwynedd coastline, concentrating on seven blue flag beaches, four harbours and two marinas, including Hafan Pwllheli that offers accommodation to 700 boats. Over the past months, the service has been focusing on confirming a brief in order to commission work on

the management models of Hafan Pwllheli in the future and arrange urgent dredging work in the basin of Victoria Dock, Caernarfon.

- 5.8 The purpose of the **Tourism, Marketing and Events Service** is to maximise the benefit and value of tourists to Gwynedd's economy. The Unit is responsible for the Snowdonia Mountains and Coast website, and one of the unit's main measures is the **number of Snowdonia Mountains and Coast website hits (ET1)**. Since April 2017, 316,901 have visited the website, and 41,000 have contacted through Facebook and Twitter. This figure is up by 10% compared with this time last year.

## **6. SAVINGS/FINANCIAL POSITION**

- 6.1 I am pleased to be able to report that the Department has realised all of this year's schemes (2017-18) for the fields of economy development. In general, the department is making acceptable progress towards realising the remaining schemes for 2018/19 and 2019/20 as well.

## **7. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

- 7.1. None to note.

## **8. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION**

### **8.1. Views of the Statutory Officers:**

#### **ii. Monitoring Officer:**

"No observations from a propriety standpoint."

#### **iii. Head of Finance Department:**

"I can confirm the accuracy of financial aspects of the report. It is encouraging that part 6.1 of the cabinet members report states that the 2017/18 savings plans will be realised on a timely basis."

### **8.2. Views of the Local Member:**

- 8.2.1 Not a local matter.

### **8.3. Results of Any Consultation:**

- 8.3.1 None to note.

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## **Appendices:**

### **Appendix 1 Measures of the Economy and Community Department (Economy Development)**