THE COUNCIL THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2017

Present: Councillor Annwen Daniels (Chair);
Councillor Annwen Hughes (Vice-chair).

Councillors: Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Freya Hannah Bentham, Dylan Bullard, Stephen Churchman, Steve Collings, R.Glyn Daniels, Anwen Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Aled Evans, Dylan Fernley, Peter Antony Garlick, Simon Glyn, Gareth Wyn Griffith, Selwyn Griffiths, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, R.Medwyn Hughes, Judith Humphreys, Nia Jeffreys, Peredur Jenkins, Aeron M.Jones, Aled Wyn Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Charles W.Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Elwyn Jones, Eric Merfyn Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Keith Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Linda A.W.Jones, Sion Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dilwyn Lloyd, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Dafydd Owen, Dewi Owen, W.Roy Owen, Jason Wayne Parry, Nigel Pickavance, Rheinallt Puw, Peter Read, Dewi Wyn Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, W.Gareth Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson, Angela Russell, Dyfrig Siencyn, Gareth Thomas, Ioan Thomas, Catrin Wager, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gareth Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Owain Williams.

Also in attendance: Dilwyn Williams (Chief Executive), Morwena Edwards and Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Directors), Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Geraint Owen (Head of Corporate Support Department), Iwan Evans (Head of Legal Services / Monitoring Officer), Rhun ap Gareth (Senior Solicitor / Deputy Monitoring Officer), Siôn Huws (Senior Solicitor - Corporate), Sioned E Williams (Head of Economy and Community), Ian Jones (Senior Corporate Support Officer), Arwel E. Jones and Janet Roberts (Senior Managers - Corporate Support), Vera Jones (Democracy Manager), Jeremy Evans (Wales Audit Office), Siôn Owen (Member Support Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Alan Jones Evans, Berwyn P. Jones, Charles W. Jones, Mike Stevens.

1. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15 June, 2017, and an extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 28 July, 2017 as true records.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) Condolences

Condolences were extended to the families of former Councillors Trevor Edwards and Brian Jones. It was noted that both had been conscientious and active councillors, serving their communities and the county in an exemplary way. A tribute was paid to former Councillor Trevor Edwards by Councillor Eric M. Jones, and to former Councillor Brian Jones by Councillor Sion Jones.

It was also noted that the Council wished to express condolences to everyone in the county's communities who had lost loved-ones recently.

The Council stood as a mark of respect.

(2) Congratulations

Everyone from Gwynedd who had recently been successful at this year's National Eisteddfod in Anglesey was congratulated, especially Gwion Hallam on winning the Crown, and Osian Rhys Williams on winning the Chair.

Thanks, also, to all staff involved in successfully arranging the Commonwealth Baton Relay leg in Gwynedd last month.

4. QUESTIONS

(1) Question from Councillor Dewi Wyn Roberts

"In my ward (Abersoch) there is great concern about the proposals to close the branch Surgery.

The Gwynedd Local Committee of the Community Health Council will invite representatives from the Health Board to discuss basic health care issues in Gwynedd. I believe the situation with the recruitment and retention of GPs in Gwynedd is an emergency waiting to happen. This will put more pressure on care services, especially in rural areas.

How is the Council, in conjunction with the Health Board, preparing for the precarious situation with doctors' services in Gwynedd at present, and what plans are in the pipeline for the short term and long term to solve medical staff recruitment - is there a response and/or are there discussions to ensure an appropriate medical service for patients and the public in the County?"

Response of the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Councillor W. Gareth Roberts

(The Cabinet Member's written response to the original question had been distributed to the members in advance).

"I am very aware of the background and understand why Councillor Dewi Roberts raises this question. The challenges facing primary care nationally and locally are substantial. An ageing population, dispersed geography, increasing demand, ongoing difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, and the need to develop new service provision patterns create a challenging situation in the field of health and care.

There is no simple answer to this question. It is increasingly obvious that traditional modes of operation no longer address the need and consequently it is necessary to embark on a journey of changing and developing that which will satisfy the complex need.

In fact, this is a question relating to the recruitment of doctors and health staff, and of course, it would be the role of the Health Board to co-ordinate efforts to formally respond to this situation.

Having said this, one of the Council's priorities is to meet the need to improve the ways we support adults receiving health and care services. The work of preventing problems from arising in the first place or responding as soon as possible when matters do arise is one of the main principles of the Act, and I am confident that the partnership work with the Health Board to provide care and preventative services in Gwynedd will lead to reducing the burden and need for clinical care.

A lot of work is being carried out in response to the need to improve the ways we support people who receive health and care services. But we need to think differently, and a part of this is looking across the entire range of services and opportunities within communities. We are on an ambitious and challenging journey but I believe that were are making good progress with the work of improving this, although there is much more work to be done."

Additional question by Councillor Dewi Wyn Roberts.

"Referring to Dr E L Jessup's letter on behalf of the North Wales' General Practitioners' Committee to Senedd Members on 7 August 2017, where it states -

'The Lleyn peninsula is also badly affected, Criccieth practice having just given in their notice of closure. The domino effect that has long been forecast is now seriously looming on the horizon.
There has been a seeming absence of proactive action to address the fundamental issues behind the crisis we now face.
Just this week, we were distressed to hear that trainee posts appear to have been withdrawn from the pool that exists in North Wales. Good candidates have moved up to North Wales in anticipation of applying for these posts and are left disappointed by this seemingly precipitous decision.'

May I ask why a decision has been taken to withdrawn training for doctors in North Wales when it is so clear that recruiting is difficult, and for confirmation that we are keeping a close eye on the situation for the well-being of our residents in Gwynedd."

Councillor W. Gareth Roberts, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being responded:

"It takes three years to train GPs. 18 months is spent at a Surgery and 18 months at a Hospital working in the fields of older people, children, obstetrics and mental health. At the end of the three years, the Doctor has to pass a qualifying examination. Eight doctors are recruited every year to the Ysbyty Gwynedd plan, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and Ysbyty Maelor Wrecsam also take on trainee doctors.

Another thing to note: The Welsh Government provides a £20,000 incentive for people to sign up to the plan. It is also possible to join the plan on a part-time basis, which then takes longer than three years to complete; the same applies if a period of maternity leave is taken."

(2) A question by Councillor Owain Williams

"Following a recent vote at the Council to refuse a proposal to cut the pay of Cabinet Members and Chairpersons by between £2,000 and £3,000 each; how much exactly will this additional sum cost this Council and taxpayers?"

(The Cabinet Member's written response to the original question had been distributed to the members in advance).

Response by Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, Leader of the Council:

It is the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales that sets the guidance nationally for Salary levels of elected members. The only element of flexibility within the guidelines is the responsibility of different councils to decide to set the salaries of Cabinet Members and Committee Chairpersons on one of two levels.

The Council resolved, in its meeting on 18 May 2017, to retain the salary level of Cabinet Members on Level 1 (£29,100) and Committee Chairpersons on Level 1 (£22,100), in accordance with the previous year's decision, on the grounds that it reflected the responsibility and work load associated with the roles in question.

In other words, the Council would not pay an additional sum as a result of this decision.

It should be noted, however, that the salary of every member had risen by £100 during the 2017/18 financial year (including the highest salaries); the additional cost to the Council this year is, therefore, based on the guidance of the Independent Panel, at £100 per member, totalling £7,500.

Had the Council voted in favour of the proposal to change the salaries to Level 2 for Cabinet Members and Chairpersons, it would have led to a saving of £37,200.

6. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2016-2017

Dr Einir Young (Chair of the Standards Committee) presented her report for 2016/17.

She noted that the Committee's work load was testament to the high standard of conduct in public life, and that the Committee's emphasis had been on training and improving Gwynedd members' awareness at a difficult financial time and a politically turbulent period.

7. MEMBERSHIP OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Mair Rowlands, submitted a report stating the need to appoint two elected members to the Standards Committee.

The Council's Business Group proposed and seconded a recommendation that Anne Lloyd Jones and Beth Lawton be appointed members of the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED
To appoint Councillors Anne Lloyd Jones and Beth Lawton as Members of the Standards Committee.

8. THE PROCEDURE FOR FINDING FUTURE SAVINGS

Councillor Peredur Jenkins, Cabinet Member for Finance stated that the Council still faced challenging times. He reminded the Council that the Gwynedd Challenge savings were nearing completion and that the scheme had been successful in finding the necessary savings. However, it had become apparent that Gwynedd needed a new savings scheme for the future

A presentation was given by the Chief Executive. He stated that the Council had been finding savings since 2006 in order to address the impact of inflation and pressures on services. With the impact of UK Government cuts continuing, as well as the uncertainty of Brexit, it had become increasingly clear that it was necessary to start planning savings to be implemented from 2019/20 onward.

The Finance Department had made projections for a number of financial scenarios, and the Cabinet would decide on differential savings targets for the departments in order to address the most likely situations. The Heads of Department would then present the possible savings to meet those targets to the Scrutiny Committees to challenge the plans on behalf of the people of Gwynedd. After the Members had had the opportunity to express their opinions, a public consultation would be held, before going ahead with deciding and implementing the final savings schemes.

After the presentation, members were given an opportunity to ask questions and make observations:

It was stated that the picture appeared to be very serious and that it was a collective responsibility to make the most of the situation and take part.

It was stated that it appeared that the Assembly had capped the increase in Council Tax at 5%. An enquiry was made as to whether such a cap would continue, and what would an increase of 5% in Council Tax mean. If the Council were to adopt a Scandinavian model, how much would the tax need to be raised to improve services?

In response, the Head of Finance Department stated that he had not scrutinised Scandinavian models, and whilst a 5% increase would result in an increase of approximately £3.5 million to the Council's coffers, it would not meet inflation. The Chief Executive stated that a formal cap had never been imposed, and he suspected that there would be a local authority somewhere facing pressure to cross the 5% threshold before Gwynedd had to do so, as the situation had become especially precarious in several places.

It was noted that some services were already under enormous pressure and the question was asked as to where the line was, beyond which no further cuts could be made.

In response, the Chief Executive stated that it was not yet clear where that line was, but it that it was necessary to ensure that every waste and every other option had been explored before reaching a decision.

It was noted that discussions had taken place in order to collaborate with Town and Community councils in order to maintain services, but that the resources available to Community Councils were scarce and that taking the burden off the Council would result in further increase in their precepts.

In discussing collaboration, the Chief Executive stated that financial planning and prioritising was a matter for the Councils themselves, but that the Council would encourage collaboration and would consider every option to protect services.

9. RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION FOR ELECTORAL REFORM IN WALES

Councillor Mair Rowlands, Deputy Leader of the Council, submitted draft reports prepared on behalf of the Council.

It was proposed and seconded to submit the observations as a response to the consultation.

RESOLVED to submit the observations in response to the consultation.

10. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DISTRICT AUDITOR

The Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, submitted an annual report on the work of the Wales Audit Office on Gwynedd Council during 2016/17, stating that it was a positive report. Mr Jeremy Evans, Local Government Manager for the Wales Audit Office, stated that the report summarised their work for the year, reiterating that it was a positive report in general although there was room to improve some aspects.

The recommendation to accept the report was proposed and seconded.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

11. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC SAFEGUARDING PANEL

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People submitted the annual report of the Strategic Safeguarding Panel. He stated that the purpose of the report was to update the Council on the previous year's achievements. He emphasised that safeguarding was a high priority area for the Council with the Strategic Panel ensuring effective arrangements. He stated that the work of the Strategic Safeguarding Panel expanded as responsibilities and requirements in the field increased, and that this was a responsibility for all members of the Council.

In response to a question about the requirements of school governors and the training and support available to them, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People encouraged any member of a school governing body to take the training opportunities available related to their responsibilities in the field. The Corporate Director stated that, so far, efforts had been concentrated on chairpersons but that a briefing note would be circulated to every school governing body in order to promote the field.

12. THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL BALANCE

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report describing the latest situation with regard to the political balance of the Council and allocation of seats on committees following recent changes.

The recommendation to accept the report was proposed and seconded.

RESOLVED to adopt the political balance.

A	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Labour Liberal Democrats	Llais Annibynnol Gwynedd	Total
Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee	10	5	2	0	1	18
Communities Scrutiny Committee	10	5	2	1	0	18
Care Scrutiny Committee	10	6	1	0	1	18
Audit and Governance	10	5	1	1	1	18

B	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Labour Liberal Democrats	Llais Annibynnol Gwynedd	Total
Democratic Services	8	5	1	0	1	15
Planning	8	4	1	1	1	15
Central Licensing	8	5	1	1	0	15

Language	8	5	1	0	1	15
Chief Officers Appointment	8	5	2	0	0	15
Employment Appeals	4	2	1	0	0	7
Number of seats	**84**	**47**	**13**	**4**	**6**	**154**

C	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Labour Liberal Democrats	Llais Annibynnol Gwynedd	Total
Pensions	4	2	0	1	0	7
Local Joint Consultative Committee	6	3	1	0	1	11
SACRE	4	3	0	0	0	7
Joint Planning Policy Committee	5	2	1	0	0	8

Total seats	**103**	**57**	**15**	**5**	**7**	**187**

13. LEISURE FACILITIES - ESTABLISHING A COUNCIL-CONTROLLED COMPANY

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture submitted a report recommending that the process of establishing a Council-controlled company commence in order to take over responsibility for leisure centres in Gwynedd. He noted that the service was popular, but that the process of finding savings had come to an end having not found the necessary savings. Setting up a Council-controlled company to run the service would bring financial flexibility that was not currently available, whilst concurrently safeguarding the service's unique culture for the future. There would be no changes to the staff's salary terms on establishing the company, and there would be close collaboration between the new company and the Council.

Taking the opportunity to ask questions and provide observations, the proposal to establish the company was welcomed as an opportunity to provide the same service to the people of Gwynedd at a lower cost. The Council was asked to not forget about Harlech swimming pool, and whether it would be possible for this important local asset to be incorporated into the new company, or at least to collaborate closely with it. In terms of the constitution of the company's management board, the need to ensure a wide range of experience and ideas from among its membership in order to ensure success was stated. The importance of appointing the best Chief Executive for the company was also emphasised as this had been identified as a critical factor in other areas where similar plans had been set up.

In response, the Chief Executive stated that the financial flexibility that would ensue as a result of establishing the company would make a strong case for starting the process of establishing it. He also stated that he would not wish any opportunities for collaboration to be dismissed at this point in the process. As the process of establishing the company got under way, there would be close collaboration with the Scrutiny procedure to ensure robust arrangements were in place. The Head of Economy and Community stated that creating the company was a golden opportunity to revive the Leisure sector whilst safeguarding the identity and culture of the Council in the service. The role of the proposed company's Chief Executive would be vital in delivering the vision.

In response to a question about the role of the Council's officers on the board of the proposed Company with respect to financial responsibility, the Monitoring Officer stated that responsibility for the company's financial situation lay with the company rather than individual directors, other than in exceptional circumstances.

It was proposed and seconded that the process of establishing a Council-controlled company for leisure facilities in Gwynedd begin.

RESOLVED To begin the process of establishing a Council-controlled company.

14. NOTICES OF MOTION

None

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 3.30 pm

CHAIRMAN