

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

REPORT TO A MEETING OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET

Date of Meeting:	16 January, 2018
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Craig ab Iago, Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure
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Title of Item:	Housing, Culture & Leisure Performance Report

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update you on what has been achieved in the field for which I, as Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure, have responsibility. This will include outlining the latest with the pledges in the Council Plan; where the performance measures have reached; and the latest in terms of the savings and cuts schemes.
- 1.2. I would remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at meetings of the Economy & Community and the Adults, Well-being and Housing Management Teams, which also included representation from the Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3. Since I last reported to you, I have spent time with the Economy Department and the Housing Service to look at their services and attempt to understand how the measures that are reported to me are reflected in the daily work of the Council.
- 1.4. The Youth Service and the Leisure Service are going through a period of change and re-modelling, and I have highlighted some of the arising risks in my report. In addition, the field of Housing is facing many challenges with increasing pressure on the Supporting People Unit and the Homelessness Unit, and the change in the benefits system. In general, I am happy with the performance. My priority during the coming months is so ensure a short term plan for how we will respond to help families and residents to cope with the arrival of the Universal Credit and changes in the benefits system.

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. E3 Working Together against Poverty

4.1.1 The purpose of this project is to implement a programme of initiatives to reduce the impact of poverty in Gwynedd jointly with partners. By the end of the project, individuals will have access to the advice and support they need to meet the challenges of their individual circumstances.

4.1.2 As I have already noted, I am eager to give priority to this work and to ensure that the Council, in collaboration with external partners, work together as the county moves over to Universal Credit. We are aware that this will affect 6,800 people, with the service being rolled-out to job centres across Gwynedd (excluding Caernarfon) in July, and the service being rolled-out to Caernarfon in November 2018. To respond to this, we are training the Council's front-line staff to understand the implications of this for our residents.

4.1.3 I recently held a meeting with each Head of Department to discuss the poverty agenda and how and what role each Department within the Council has to play as we address the effects of poverty. It is fair to say that our response to the agenda has been fragmentary, but with the support of each Head of Department, I am eager to change this and ensure co-ordination across the Council. At this meeting, it was decided that there was a need to ensure that specific attention would be given to Early Years and the Supporting Families Strategy. In addition, it was noted that the Education Department has a central role to play in raising the awareness of school Headteachers and the teaching staff of the changes with the Universal Credit. It is crucial that the staff are aware of how these changes in benefits could impact the child that comes to the school. There is also further work to be done to raise the awareness of Governors and local members of these changes.

4.1.4 By the beginning of the year, I am eager to ensure that we are clear on the direction with the Poverty agenda in the Council, and that the Heads of Department and our staff are aware of the leading role they have to play.

4.2. E4 Housing Supply Strategy

4.2.1 The purpose of this project is to implement our strategy to increase the supply and the housing mix in order to ensure that our housing supply is suitable for the needs of the people of Gwynedd. The project will lead to different solutions in different areas.

4.2.2 Establishing Affordable Housing for Gwynedd residents in rural areas

The work of submitting three planning applications is ongoing and a local consultation has been completed in the Penygroes and Bethesda areas in order to discuss possible plans. Planning applications for rented housing and affordable housing in the three areas will be submitted during January to March 2018, depending on the analysis of the housing needs within these specific areas. Should the three planning applications be successful, up to 39 homes could be provided throughout Gwynedd.

4.2.3 **Bringing empty homes back into use**

Work to bring empty housing back into use is continuing and is within the target that has been set. Discussions are taking place in terms of attempting to extend further than the target. In a recent meeting with the Department, there was an eagerness to move forward with this, and a feeling that we are missing an opportunity. The assigned resources limit further extension and should we want to extend the ambition, additional investment would need to be considered. Discussions have been held with Welsh Government and Horizon to attempt to identify possible investment to respond to additional demand and consideration may need to be given to whether it is possible to denote funding from the second homes and empty housing premium to target more property. The Department also intends to intertwine with the financial application of Plan Three in the Bangor area.

4.2.4 **Provision for homeless people**

The Homelessness Service is looking at options for using empty properties in order to have a Supported Housing model in the area. There have also been efforts to tie empty housing investment to schemes that increase housing supply for homeless services purposes. Discussions are ongoing in terms of getting a resource within the asset plan to find new accommodation in Dolgellau.

4.2.5 **Provision for older persons to promote independence**

The need to meet the demographic challenge has recently been discussed at the Housing Symposium, and the recognition that this is a field that needs prioritisation. Work has shown that suitable housing could save costs but that unsuitable housing creates additional costs to care and health. We have identified that solutions need to be discussed and we are looking at well-being areas to attempt to identify relevant answers on a local level as it is possible that requirements differentiate from area to area. A comprehensive analysis is being undertaken in order to consider existing demands and supply within the different areas to confirm what needs to be prioritised. We have asked that funding is assigned within the assets plan in order to have two specific provisions for older people and to consider possibilities in terms of using external grant sources to support partnership initiatives.

5. **MEASURING PERFORMANCE**

- 5.1. **Appendix 1** reports on performance measures that are associated with my portfolio in the Economy and Community Department. As I have previously noted, I have spent time with staff in the Economy & Community Department to consider meaningful measures. I am eager for the Department to attempt to report on measures in a visual way in future.
- 5.2. In terms of the Economy & Community Department, my portfolio includes the Leisure Service, Youth, Community Regeneration, Museums and the Arts, Archives and Libraries and Information.
- 5.3. Several of these services have been, or are going through a period of change and re-modelling. The purpose of every service has now been agreed, and measures have been decided. I'm going to go through these measures by service.

- 5.4. The **Leisure Service** provides Healthy Living and Sports programmes which provide a range of inclusive physical activities and Healthy Living Centres facilities in the County. The service has adapted and refined its measures since April in order to capture the information most important to the people of Gwynedd and clearly explain the direction of the work. I believe that further work is to be done on some measures and this is part of the discussion I have commenced with the service.
- 5.5. I am satisfied with the service's performance, with acceptable progress having been made since April 2017. The **% of 11 year old children who have attained the National Curriculum Standard for swimming** has been increasing annually, and this is because the service has been carrying out targeted work with the schools where children did not reach the level. A Swimming Development Plan is in the process of being developed, which means that there will be an emphasis on further developing swimming in the County, including a Disabilities Swimming Track. One thing I am eager for the service to consider as we develop this plan is to obtain feedback from the children and parents on the swimming lessons - this could be beneficial when shaping the service offered.
- 5.6. The service is also responsible for implementing the Exercise Referral and Dementia Go schemes. The department has drafted measures which assess the quality of life score of the people who take part in these programmes. Both measures show a strong result since April compared with last year. Good preventative work is done by these two teams, but I still feel that further work is needed to capture the impact of this work as a whole. I want to see how far the journey has been for the individuals who were part of these schemes. I feel that it is difficult to capture the entire impact of the work in the measures therefore I asked for examples of cases studies that show the journey of some residents as they participate in the schemes. I hope to share copies of these case studies with you over the next few months.
- 5.7. The Healthy Living Centres are going through a period of change as we consider a new Alternative Model. The timetable for this work is tight. Work has also been done to complete the centres' self-service systems to allow the public to book equipment and fitness sessions on-line, which is a positive step forwards.
- 5.8. On the other hand, the customer satisfaction figure is down this year to 87.7% compared to 89.36% last year. The method of seeking the opinion of customers has changed this year, with the electronic use of questionnaires. When analysing the data, matters such as lockers and hygiene have been brought up, and therefore the team will consider the solutions. I feel that the team has further work to do in contacting the customers who do not continue with their membership as this information would be useful, especially if we are going to improve the service offered.
- 5.9. The purpose of the **Libraries and Information Service** is to secure the access of Gwynedd residents to support, resources and information which gives them the opportunity to learn and gain skills, read and enjoy. The service has been through a period of change and has now reached a fairly stable period, and a new manager has been in post since July.
- 5.10. The performance of the service's measures is quite stable so far. The figure for the **number of visits to libraries during the year** is lower for 2016/17 (3,067) compared with the previous year, but there are reasons for this, including reducing the

opening hours of some libraries. I am not overly worried about this as the figure seems to be increasing this year, with 3,150 visits up to October 2017.

- 5.11. I feel that the Service has further work to do on its measures, and with the service manager now having been on a Ffordd Gwynedd course, she intends to consider other measures.
- 5.12. The **Museums and Arts Service** runs two museums in Gwynedd and is responsible for the collections and creating exhibitions at both, namely: Storiol and the Lloyd George Museum. Recently, the service has been in discussions with Friends of Neuadd Buddug and the new plan to develop the new school in Bala about the community elements. I will be keeping an eye on this in future. Since April, **96% of customers have stated that they are happy with the service provided.**
- 5.13. The purpose of the **Youth Service** is to ensure access for young people (aged 11-25) to a range of informal learning experiences that give them opportunities to gain skills, to venture, to enjoy and to play a full part in their communities. The service is going through a period of change, and has been engaging on a new delivery model for the County. The report will be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in January, and I will be submitting a report to you in March 2018. I believe that further work is to be done on Youth measures as well, and it would be beneficial to have the opinion of young people on what is being offered at the clubs. On a positive note, the service has successfully ensured that **309 young people received accreditations through the service** since July 2017.
- 5.14. In the same way as the work that has taken place within the Economy Department, I have asked the **Housing Department** to review the purpose of its Units and its measures in order to ensure its measures the right things and shows where we make a difference to the people we serve. I will be working with the Housing Service over the coming months to develop this further. In addition to the Performance Challenge Meeting, jointly with the Housing Service, I have held a workshop to look at establishing priorities for the field. See **Appendix 2** for a copy of the Services' measures.
- 5.15. Together with this work, we need to understand the demand for housing within our areas in order to prioritise the Housing supply that is needed within our areas. The Department is currently working on mapping the demand for housing within our well-being areas. This work will lead to our response to the need to improve our Housing supply.
- 5.16. **Homelessness Unit** - Some decline can be seen in the time it **takes to achieve what is important (TAI 002)** (103 days in quarter 1 compared with 69 average for 2015/16 and 54 in 2016/17). The **length of stay in temporary accommodation (TAI003)** (80 days) also shows some decline when comparing with 2015/16 but it compares well with last year and with other authorities that also report that there is similar pressure. A recent Homelessness Census notes that there are 33 people who could currently be sleeping rough in Gwynedd, which is an increase on last year.
- 5.17. A number of reasons for the decline in performance were reported, such as the fact that some individuals, who are difficult to accommodate for various reasons such as Mental Health and Substance Misuse, remain in temporary accommodation for long periods of time. It was reported that 17 single people were currently in a B&B due to difficulty in finding affordable one bedroom accommodation for them. It was reported that two people had been in B&B accommodation at the Council's cost for nearly a year. We also see difficulty in

finding suitable accommodation due to some individuals who demonstrate anti-social behaviour and those who are leaving prison. In my opinion, better solutions are needed for these individuals, although I do not feel that this is the Council's responsibility alone. I will be holding further discussions with the Department and our partners to look at this further.

- 5.18. Welsh Government presented homelessness statistics at the end of July 2017. These figures provide an overview of the national homelessness picture over the past two years since the changes to the Housing Act and the shift in emphasis to working in a more preventative way. The figures confirm the local picture we are seeing in Gwynedd, namely the increase in homelessness and the trend that this will continue. The number of referrals to the Unit has increased substantially - 560 in 2014/15, 648 in 2015/16 and 722 in 2016/17 which again reflects the national trend.
- 5.19. The picture is similar with the Supporting People Unit, with increasing pressure relating to the increase in referrals and the increase in the complex nature of referrals. Benefit changes are placing pressure on our service users and our users need more support in terms of budgeting.
- 5.20. The performance of the **Supporting People Unit** for the January-June period can be seen in **Appendix 1**, which shows good performance. As I have already noted, I will be working with the Unit to ensure that we are measuring the right things. I want the Unit to revisit the purpose of the Unit and develop measures that show us that we make a difference, and where we should prioritise our resources.
- 5.21. In addition, a request has been made for the Grants and Enforcement Unit to reconsider its measures in order to ensure that we are measuring the right things. The measure of **average number of days taken to issue a Disabled Facilities Grant (PSR002)** is performing much better during Quarter 2. I believe that this measure needs to be divided into complex cases and simpler cases in order to ensure a clearer picture of what is being achieved.
- 5.22. I am pleased to report that the performance of the **'Strat6' Number of affordable units secured for Gwynedd** measure is performing satisfactorily. The Department anticipates that we will meet our target of 50 affordable units in the 2017/18 year.

6. FINANCIAL/SAVINGS SITUATION

- 6.1. The Economy Department has realised all of its schemes for 2017/18. In general, the Department is also making very acceptable progress towards realising the 2018/19 plans, which include implementing the Full Council's decision on 5 October, 2017 to approve the business case for establishing a "Gwynedd Council Controlled Company" to undertake the leisure facilities provision, which would be operational during Quarter 3 of 2018/19. It is anticipated that this will enable the Council to create substantial annual savings.
- 6.2. In terms of schemes in the field of Housing within the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, in general, there are no concerns in terms of the ability to realise the efficiency savings or cuts. However, it is anticipated that there will be some slippage in realising the "TAI4 - Review the existing structures and locations of the Housing Service" scheme in full by the end of the 2017/18 financial year, in accordance with the aim.

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:

i. Monitoring Officer:

"No comment from a propriety perspective."

ii. Head of Finance Department:

"I am satisfied that the contents of part 6 of the report is a fair reflection of the progress of savings projects in the housing, culture and leisure services. The report reflects the situation that the achievement of savings remains extremely challenging, and officers from the Finance Department will continue to support and advise the Cabinet Member and relevant officers as required."

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.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Economy & Community Measures of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture

Appendix 2 Housing Service Measures

Background Documents:

None.