
EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22/11/18

Present: Councillor Beth Lawton (Chair).

Councillors: Freya Bentham, Steve Collings, Aled Evans, Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Judith Humphreys, Elwyn Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Cai Larsen, Elfed Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Cemlyn Williams and Gareth Williams.

Co-opted Members: Dylan Davies (Meirionnydd Parent / Governors Representative) and Dilwyn Elis Hughes (UCAC).

Ex-officio Member: Councillor Edgar Wyn Owen.

Officers present:

Vera Jones (Members' Manager – Democratic Services) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Present for item 5 below:

Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member for Economic Development)
Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department)
Llyr B Jones (Senior Economy and Regeneration Manager)

Present for item 6 below:

Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member for Economic Development)
Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department)
Colin Morris (Business Support Manager)

Present for item 7 below:

Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department)

Present for item 8 below:

Garem Jackson (Head of Education)
Bethan Griffith (Senior Ancillary Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Keith Jones, Dewi Owen and Paul Rowlinson (Vice-chair);
Anest Gray Frazer (Church in Wales) and David Healey (ATL);
Councillors Craig ab Iago (Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture) and Gareth Thomas (Education).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Selwyn Griffiths declared a personal interest in item 7 - Role of the Area Regeneration Officers in future, as his son worked in the Economy Unit and there was a possibility that he might be responsible for the Community Regeneration Unit in the future.

Councillor Aled Evans declared a personal interest in Item 7 - Role of the Area Regeneration Officers in Future, as a relation of his worked in the Community Regeneration Unit.

The members were of the opinion that they were prejudicial interests, and they withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

3 URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of previous meetings of this committee held on the 20 September and 15 October (Special Meeting), 2018 as true records.

5. REVIEW OF PWLLHELI HAFAN AND HARBOUR

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development together with a slide presentation by the Senior Economy and Regeneration Manager tracing the history of Pwllheli Hafan and Harbour since the early 1990s, outlining the relevant considerations and detailing the work undertaken thus far in terms of developing options on the site, as a result of a downward trend in the income generated at the Hafan since 2008/09. The scrutiny committee was invited to consider this work and members were asked if they agreed:-

- With the core aims proposed for evaluating the current situation and alternative options for the future.
- There was a case for change.
- With the recommendations to further develop four options.

The Cabinet Member, the Head of Service and the Senior Manager elaborated on the contents of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from members.

The Chair summarised the main conclusions of the discussion as follows:-

- The committee was of the opinion that there was a case for change as the existing situation, with the downward trend in income and use of the Hafan and Harbour, led to a risk of being unable to deliver the core aim of the Hafan to be an economic driver, especially for the Pwllheli area, and was therefore unsustainable.
- That the committee were in agreement with the options to undertake further work and there were key messages for the service to consider when delivering this work, specifically in terms of looking how further investment could be made to make the Hafan and Harbour viable and to seek a solution for the situation with dredging and sediment disposal in both the short and long term. It should also be considered if there were any lessons to be learnt from other authorities in terms of sediment disposal.
- Regarding the option to retain the net income of £400k, it was anticipated that the Hafan would return this year, that the committee was of the view that they had to be open, on one hand to what impact this would have on the rest of the Council's services, and on the other hand, to what the impact would be of not

doing so on the Pwllheli area economy, and the risk of losing the marina in the end.

- There was also a message in terms of the need to understand the customer's requirements in order to be able to respond to them and the options should look at how to market and keep the site viable etc.
- That a further report should be presented to this committee in due course, following developing the various options in greater detail.

6. SUPPORTING GWYNEDD BUSINESSES (IN RELATION TO BREXIT)

Submitted - report by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development detailing on how the Council and other organisations support local business generally and in response to Brexit.

The Cabinet Member, the Head of Service and the Manager elaborated on the contents of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from members.

The Chair summarised the main conclusions of the discussion as follows:-

- The observations reflected the fact that it remained a confusing and uncertain period. It was recognised that it was very difficult to support business in the current climate due to the lack of information etc, however, it was welcomed that high risk businesses were being targeted in order to try and see if there was anything else the Council could do to assist them. It was also recognised that timing the discussion was difficult and they had to avoid causing confusion in order not to mislead.
- That Committee members desired the Department to further consider how to support the smallest businesses in Gwynedd, and perhaps give information or expand the use of social media to maximise the information available and what people know about the support that already exists, or perhaps trial talks in smaller communities.
- Committee members also wanted the Department to consider if there was capacity to give an update to community councils in order that they are also aware of what is available in terms of support from the Council.
- That the Service will be requested to inform members of any developments in this field , e.g. via Rhaeadr, rather than wait from one scrutiny committee to the next.

7. ROLE OF THE AREA REGENERATION OFFICERS IN FUTURE

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture inviting the committee's views on two options to make the best possible use of the skills and resources of the Area Regeneration Team Officers in the future, namely:-

- Option 1 - merge the role of the Community Regeneration Team with other teams within the Economic Development Programmes Service.
- Option 2 - retain a small team to keep the emphasis on supporting communities to achieve.

The observations of the committee on the following recommendations were also requested:-

- Re-define the role of the Community Regeneration Officers as Community Support Officers that would incorporate the role of Community Council and Third Sector liaison.
- That a liaison officer be identified for individual communities, but that officers operate more as a county team in order to benefit from the specific strengths and skills of different team members.
- That the team strengthens the link with libraries in order to promote community access to sources of information and assistance in future.

Copies of the Community Regeneration Service's Work Programme were distributed to members at the meeting.

The Head of Service elaborated on the contents of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from members.

The Chair summarised the main conclusions of the discussion as follows:-

- There was general support for option 2, on the grounds that this would create a resource that would enable the Council to maintain a relationship with the communities across a wider range of programmes; they would not be restricted to programmes that contribute to regeneration and economic development only.
- There was also support to pilot the scheme with libraries as a centre for information sources.

8. SCHOOL DINNER DEBTS

Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Education at the Chair's request detailing on the position with school dinner debts, the processes that have been operational to respond to the debts, together with the further steps the Department has, and intends to implement to respond appropriately to the situation, reducing school dinner debts over time.

The Head of Service and the Senior Officer elaborated on the contents of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from members.

Attention was drawn to the fact that there was an error in the English version of the column '*Value of invoices raised in the year*' in Table B under paragraph 4.1 of the report (page 29 of the programme) and that the correct figures were as follows:-

Year	Value of invoices raised in the year
2013/14	£21,937.80
2014/15	£26,600.12
2015/16	£29,254.63
2016/17	£36,634.45
2017/18	£39,576.81

The Chair summarised the main conclusions of the discussion as follows:-

- That the committee supported what was currently happening in terms of targeting assistance to those schools with the largest debts to ensure that they follow the procedure and that the Heads take responsibility and understand what should occur regarding the arrangements.

- There was also support to look at bringing the Authority to be part of the process as soon as possible, this included regular monitoring of the situation, looking if there was a central role for the Authority, rather than for this to happen per school.
- There was also support for the Department's intention to look if it was possible to prepare a package to assist those families who have difficulty paying.
- That the Department is asked to consider if it is possible to undertake further work to see what, if at all is the link between the increase in school dinners and the levels of debts.
- That there was strong support to get to grips with the situation as soon as possible, as the Department had already begun, in order that fewer families get into debt.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 2.25pm
(with a 45 minute break for Lunch).