
THE COUNCIL 09.07.15

Present: Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Chairman);
Councillor Eric Merfyn Jones (Vice-chairman).

Councillors: Endaf Cooke, Annwen Daniels, Lesley Day, Gwynfor Edwards, Dyfed Edwards, Elwyn Edwards, Trevor Edwards, Thomas Ellis, Alan Jones Evans, Jean Forsyth, Gweno Glyn, Simon Glyn, Gwen Griffith, Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Sian Gwenllian, Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, Jason Humphreys, Peredur Jenkins, Aeron M.Jones, Anne Lloyd Jones, Brian Jones, Charles W.Jones, Dyfrig Jones, Elin Walker Jones, John Wynn Jones, Linda Wyn Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Beth Lawton, Dilwyn Lloyd, June E.Marshall, Dafydd Meurig, Dewi Owen, Michael Sol Owen, W.Roy Owen, William Tudor Owen, Nigel Pickavance, Peter Read, Caerwyn Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, W.Gareth Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Angela Russell, Dyfrig Siencyn, Mike Stevens, Gareth Thomas, Glyn Thomas, Ioan Thomas, Ann Williams, Eirwyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gethin Glyn Williams, Gruffydd Williams, Hefin Williams, Owain Williams, R.H.Wyn Williams, Mandy Williams-Davies, Robert J.Wright and Eurig Wyn.

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), Arwel E. Jones (Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery), Hawis Jones (Strategic Planning and Performance Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Craig ab Iago, Stephen Churchman, Anwen Davies, Eddie Dogan, Aled Evans, Christopher Hughes, Llywarch Bowen Jones, Sion Jones, Linda Morgan and John Wyn Williams.

1. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the Council's Annual Meeting held on 14 May 2015, as a true record.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) Condolences

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

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect.

(2) Best wishes

Best wishes were extended to Councillor Eddie Dogan following his recent ill-health, and to Councillor Linda Morgan who was currently receiving treatment.

(3) Congratulations

The following were congratulated:

- All the children and young people from Gwynedd who had competed at the Urdd Eisteddfod held in Caerphilly.
- Ysgol Glanaethwy on their success in coming third in the 'Britain's Got Talent' competition.
- Ysgol Abererch on winning the Healthy Eating Initiative Award with the SMŴ-FI project. These were national awards, and over 2,500 schools had competed.
- Ysgol O M Edwards, Llanuwchllyn for their effort and success in gaining the Platinum Eco-Schools Award, the first school in Gwynedd to receive this award.
- Ysgol Ederm on winning the Devine company's Fair Trade Award.
- Councillor Dewi Owen on his election to the North Wales Board of the Farmers' Union of Wales.

It was also noted that Ysgol Craig y Deryn, Llanegryn, had been shortlisted for the Architecture Gold Medal at the National Eisteddfod to be held in Meifod, and had also won the Royal Town Planning Institute British Award, following winning the Welsh Award in 2014.

4. CORRESPONDENCE, COMMUNITATIONS, OR ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Cabinet Member for Resources thanked everyone, both members and officers, who had participated in the Cuts Scrutiny Workshops, noting that the main observations from the sessions had been incorporated into the recommendations to the Cabinet on 30 July.

5. GWYNEDD COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-17

The Deputy Leader presented a report recommending that the Council adopted a specific Strategic Plan for the coming year.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:-

- Referring to the Digital Gwynedd Project, a request was made to examine whether the broadband in the county's rural schools could be extended to nearby buildings and residents, so that the wider community could take advantage of the provision. The Chairman noted that this matter could be examined further. Assurance was requested that the Council would pressurise BT Openreach to ensure that fast broadband would reach all rural areas. The Chairman noted that this matter would receive attention.
- Referring to the Conducting an Equality Impact Assessment template in Appendix 2, a member noted that she had recently received a complaint that the marriage pack for single sex couples included the words 'bride' and 'groom', crossed out with 'partner 1' and 'partner 2' noted in their place, and also contained the words 'him' and 'her'. She was also under the impression that there was no opportunity to walk the partners down the aisle. She added that this excluded people and

requested that the issue be discussed at a scrutiny committee. In response, the Chairman noted that these matters were outside the remit of the Strategic Plan, but were matters that required attention, and that the message would be relayed to the relevant department.

- The Cabinet and officers were congratulated on the Strategic Plan. It was noted that there was a very clear focus in the document and it was agreed that these were the main strategic areas that the Council should concentrate upon during the forthcoming extremely challenging period.
- Officers were requested to do everything within their means to ensure that Gwynedd benefitted from a fair share of the £9m Rural Development Programme funding that had been earmarked by the Welsh Government for rural areas and communities. The Chairman noted that this observation would be forwarded to the Cabinet. The Deputy Leader added that the Council needed to ensure that it attracted the maximum amount of funding from European Funds. Gwynedd Council's record in this field was extremely good, and this work should certainly continue in order to attract the maximum benefit possible to the county's rural economy.
- It was noted that the Council itself must take steps to strengthen the local economy, but the planning system militated against economic developments, and it was emphasised that the Council should be able to support small businesses in their own localities, rather than sending them to urban industrial estates. The Deputy Leader agreed with the observation, noting that a scrutiny committee working party was examining the situation to look at how to establish a positive planning system that encouraged, rather than impeded, the economy.
- It was noted that the opening of the new school in Y Groeslon had meant the closure of Carmel school, with over 60 pupils, and had led to a rift in the village as many of Carmel's children now went to Penygroes.
- The report was welcomed, but it was noted that it gave rise to more questions than it answered. The fact that the Council had targets to aim for was welcomed, but how realistic and practical they were was questioned, e.g. the intention to establish the new school for the Y Gader catchment area as a Welsh medium school. It was noted that the document did not refer either to what would happen in Y Bala. Also, the statement that Gwynedd was a great distance from the major areas was not accepted in the Poverty, Deprivation, Economy, or Housing departments. Although Gwynedd was on the periphery of the United Kingdom, it was not far from the populated areas such as Liverpool and Manchester, and it appeared that there was no political will to take advantage of Gwynedd's proximity to these markets. This part of the plan also mentioned that 1,993 people had registered on social housing waiting lists. Assuming that this figure referred to families rather than individuals, and assuming that on average there were 3 people in a family, it appeared that there were approximately 6-7,000 people in need of social housing in Gwynedd. There was also reference in the plan to a significant increase in the number of the county's businesses that had been awarded contracts from the Council, but what did '*significant*' mean? Reference was made to the fact that a school in Gwynedd served beef from Botswana, and that foreign workers were employed on a project to improve home energy efficiency in the Deiniolen area, and previously in Carmel, and the Council's priority in terms of employing local people was questioned. The fact that there was a specific section on the Welsh language in the plan was welcomed, but it was emphasised that this should be incorporated into all other sections as it was an integral part of the entire plan, and should not stand alone. It had been understood that the Council had lost £500,000 in housing benefit income, but the members had not received any information about this. The Chairman asked the member who raised these points to summarise the questions and ask the Cabinet Member for answers.

- It was noted that the Strategic Plan tried to identify areas where the Council had influence, and where it could make a difference with the resources and powers to hand. The days when the public sector and the local council bore the burden for everything had long gone, and the councillors needed to undertake their role as local members in trying to harness the remaining resources.
- It was emphasised that the Council had no powers to prevent foreign workers from entering, and that this was a matter covered by European laws.
- It was noted that the Strategic Plan, as it stood, could not deal with the constant pattern and trend of rural poverty that had become embedded for far too long, but that the plan should be commended as it was a move in the right direction.

In conclusion, the Deputy Leader noted that he appreciated the observations on the Strategic Plan, which was a live plan, and he confirmed that consideration would be given to incorporating those observations, or to implement them on a daily basis.

RESOLVED to adopt the Strategic Plan.

6. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2014/15

Submitted – The Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services for 2014/15.

In her presentation, the Director outlined the performance of Gwynedd's social services over the past year, reporting on both good performance and areas for improvement, within the context of the need for transformation and change in order to respond to legislative and financial requirements. She also expanded upon the issues facing the Social Services over the forthcoming period, and the extent to which this performance placed Gwynedd on a firm footing.

Also, she took the opportunity to thank both the staff from the departments and the care workers throughout Gwynedd, both internal and external, for their hard work and total commitment to this important work. She specifically thanked Cabinet Members, Councillors Gareth Roberts and Mair Rowlands for their support and the former Cabinet member, Councillor Wyn Williams for his work during the year. She also thanked Aled Davies for stepping in as Head of the Adults, Health and Wellbeing Department, and wished Gwenan Parry a speedy recovery.

Following the presentation, the Director responded to a series of questions / comments from members in relation to:-

- The need for three Care Champions - one each for Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd. It was noted, with the major changes on the horizon, that it would be difficult for the current Care Champion to continue to act for the whole of Gwynedd, and as there was a close link with the Community Health Council's role and work, it was suggested that the members who represented Arfon and Dwyfor on that body could undertake some of the work of the Care Champions in those areas. The Chairman noted that this observation would be forwarded to the service for consideration.
- Disappointment that the Council had abolished the post of Disabilities Officer following the retirement of the former post-holder, and a request to re-establish the post. The Chairman noted that this observation would be forwarded to the service for consideration.
- Collaboration with the health service in light of the current difficulties of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.
- Success of the Alltwen Project.

- Staff morale and how to monitor it.
- The opportunity to promote different ways of working and innovation in moving the transformation agenda forward.
- The Edge of Care Team's success, in the transformation of the children's service.
- The challenge of retaining the current staff and attracting new staff from the local schools, universities and colleges in the forthcoming financial climate.
- Who, and what were responsible for the high cost of the service, given that many people never access the service?
- Why were cancer levels so high in Gwynedd? The Director noted that she and the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health could raise these types of questions in the County Forum with officers and managers from the Health Board, Public Health Wales and the third sector.

The Director and her staff were thanked for all their work during the year.

7. THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL BALANCE

The report which reviewed the Council's political balance was submitted by the Deputy Leader.

RESOLVED to approve the allocation of seats on the Council's committees in accordance with the table below:-

SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Individual Member
Corporate	9	4	3	1	1	
Communities	9	4	2	1	1	1
Services	9	4	3	1		1
Audit	9	5	2	2		

OTHER COMMITTEES

	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Individual Member
Democratic Services	8	4	2	1		
Language	8	4	2	1		
Planning	8	3	2	1	1	
Central Licensing	8	4	2			1
Employment Appeals	3	1	1	1		1
Appointment of Principal Officers	7	4	2	1	1	

Number of seats	78	37	21	10	4	4	15
							4

	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Llais Gwynedd	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Individual Member	
Pensions	3	2	0	1	1		
Local Consultative Joint Committee	6	2	2	1			
Special Educational Needs Joint Committee	3	2	1			1	
Joint Planning Policy Committee	4 (3 seats and one substitute)	2	1	1			
CYSAG	4	2	1				
Number of seats	98	47	26	13	5	5	194

8. ABSENCE OF A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader submitted a report recommending that the Council approved the absence of Councillor Linda Morgan from meetings of the Council because she was receiving treatment at the moment that would be likely to affect her ability to attend formal meetings of the authority for a while.

The Councillor was wished well and it was noted that her fellow Councillors would offer every service that could be of assistance to her in her area.

RESOLVED to approve the absence of Councillor Linda Morgan from meetings of the Council because of personal circumstances in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, enabling her to continue to be a member of Gwynedd Council.

9. NOTICES OF MOTION

- (a) The following notice of motion was submitted by Councillor R. H. Wyn Williams, in accordance with Section 4.20 of the Constitution and it was seconded.

“We call upon the Westminster Government to devolve the powers of the Crown Commission to the Welsh Government in order for Wales to take advantage of income generated from the lands and coastline of Wales. This will mean that Wales will be more prosperous as it will own the rights in relation to fishing, mining, searching for gas and oil, tidal and wave power and wind farms, gold and silver and all the energy and resources within the designated waters and territorial boundaries of Wales. We also call upon other Local Authorities in Wales to support the request.”

During the ensuing discussion it was noted:-

- Although the principle behind the motion was welcomed, this was not as simple as it sounded as Wales would have to be an independent country in order to receive these rights.

- This would happen in Scotland.
- The motion was supported and should this be achieved and the funding came to Wales, it should go to those areas from whence the money came and not to Cardiff.

The motion was supported.

RESOLVED to accept the motion.

- (b) Submitted, for information, a letter from Mark Thomas, Editor of the Daily Post, in response to Councillor Sian Gwenllian's Notice of Motion to the last meeting regarding Trinity Mirror's decision to close the Herald Office in Caernarfon.

RESOLVED to note the letter.

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 2.50pm.