

MEETING	Llŷn AONB Joint Advisory Committee
DATE	18 November 2015
TITLE	Gwynedd Challenge
PURPOSE	Inform members
AUTHOR	Llŷn AONB Service manager
RECOMMENDATION	Accept the information.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Gwynedd Challenge is the name given to the exercise undertaken by Gwynedd Council on how to deal with the Council's future budget deficit. This includes making financial cutbacks to the value of £7 million.
- 1.2 The deficit exists because the grant given by Welsh Government is decreasing while inflation and increased need for services persists. Gwynedd Council intends to increase Council Tax to meet some of the deficit but significant financial cutbacks will also need to be made, in addition to further savings. More information on the financial situation can be seen on the Council's website.

2.0 POSSIBLE CUTBACKS

- 2.1 Due to the above Gwynedd Council's Cabinet considered a long list of possible financial cuts. Information had been provided to members on the different services, including the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) service, which referred to work undertaken, statutory implications, grants etc.
- 2.2 There followed a series of workshops with Members to discuss the various options before the Cabinet decided on a list of cuts to be included in the public consultation. Ending the AONB Service was one measure which it was decided to include; it was noted this would produce savings of **£39,150** for the Council.

3.0 CONSULTATION ON GWYNEDD CHALLENGE

- 3.1 The Council then moved on to arrange public consultation on the possible cutbacks under the Gwynedd Challenge banner. The importance of getting the opinion of Gwynedd's people's was stressed. It was arranged to gain public feedback on the matter through:
- Call-in meetings – at 19 locations within Gwynedd
 - Public Forums – at 13 Secondary School locations in the County
 - Questionnaire – paper and electronic versions available.
- 3.2 The consultation method is different to the usual in that it provides an opportunity for individuals and organisations to choose which services they would decide to

retain – up to a total of £5 million. A whole raft of services are included including environmental services, road maintenance, public transport, leisure centres etc.

- 3.3 With some of the services there are options to retain different levels which produce more/ less financial savings. With the AONB Service there is only one option which is to retain the service.
- 3.4 Clearly there are significant implications to these cutbacks throughout the County, including for the Llŷn area.

4.0 THE AONB SERVICE

- 4.1 It's possible to choose the AONB Service as one of the services to be retained by filling in the paper or online questionnaire. However, the whole questionnaire will need to be completed and some, for whatever reasons, might not wish to do that. On enquiry it was agreed that the AONB Service could be directly supported by writing or emailing the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services.
- 4.2 We wrote to you as members of the Joint Advisory Committee to draw attention to Gwynedd Challenge and the threat to the AONB Service. We also contacted work partners, SDF grant recipients and other who had benefited for AONB related work to highlight the situation and seek their support.
- 4.3 We also understand that the Council has consulted directly with various bodies such as NRW, CPRW and the National Association of AONBs.

5.0 THE NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Originally the consultation period was due to end on the 13th of November but has now been extended until the end of the month.
- 5.2 Following this the response to the consultation exercise will be assessed – however there is no information as yet regarding how this will be done.
- 5.3 It is understood that the cutbacks will then be discussed at a meeting of the full Council in early 2016 and decisions will be made on which cuts are to be implemented from April 2016 onwards.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 Accept the information.