

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 30 November 2021
Cabinet Member: Councillor Catrin Wager
Contact Officer: Steffan Jones, Head of Highways and Municipal
Contact Telephone Number: 32402
Title of Item: Clean and Tidy Communities Teams

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1 The Cabinet is requested to approve the proposal to establish teams to undertake minor maintenance work and to complement the regular maintenance activities. The intention is to respond to concerns on a community level and make a visible difference to the area's image. This will make a significant contribution to the cleanliness, neatness and security of the local built environment.
- 1.2 The Cabinet is asked to approve an allocation of £1,523,730 from the Transformation Fund to provide the necessary budget and its associated costs on a one-off basis for a period of three years to commence as soon as possible.

2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

- 2.1 'Clean and Tidy Communities' was adopted as an improvement priority within the 2021/22 Council Plan. When engaging with residents as part of the 'Our Area Engagement Programme', concerns about untidiness and lack of investment in beautifying our communities were highlighted as themes of importance to our residents. Comments were gathered on what is important to the residents of each regeneration area during September/October 2021. It can be seen in Appendix 1 that a significant percentage of the comments relate to lack of investment to ensure clean and tidy communities.
- 2.2 Due to pressure on the resources we have for routine maintenance, minor issues affecting the appearance of the County tend to be missed, as any interventions to deal with minor works can affect the performance of the maintenance programme.
- 2.3 If these minor issues affecting the appearance of the County are to be properly addressed in order to achieve clean and tidy communities, new provision is needed.

- 2.4 It is recommended that Clean and Tidy Community Teams are established across the County as an innovative way of adding value and responding to the specific concerns by Gwynedd residents and their communities during the first phase of 'Our Area' engagement work.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The Council introduced 'Community Gangs' during 2007 to respond to complaints and minor problems. This initiative was successful, with a reduction in complaints and positive feedback from residents and community councils. Unfortunately, this service had to be discontinued in order to achieve financial savings and it is clear that the impact was greater than anticipated at the time.
- 3.2 We also succeeded to implement the 'Tidy Towns' initiative in Gwynedd between 2008 and 2018. This initiative aimed to empower people to take more responsibility for the quality of their local environment and there were various positive developments and successes. Some of the developments during the first three years included grants for 50 projects to provide equipment and logistical support to voluntary groups as they undertook litter clearance projects and provide community improvement grant aids. As part of this initiative the Community Gangs were undertaking 'Blitz' program of work (tidying up) throughout the County. Tidy Towns also facilitated and funded a primary school environmental show to raise awareness of recycling, litter and dog fouling among a young audience.
- 3.3 This approach is not entirely new, many other Councils have developed 'Environmental Hit Squads' within community boundaries. During 2019 Wigan Council introduces 'Sparkle Gangs'. As part of this initiative towns received four days of deep cleaning each quarter. This included undertaking activities such as sweeping roads and tracks, washing signs, clearing shrubs and spraying weeds. Similar examples can be found from Cardiff, Oxfordshire, Corby, Enfield and Salisbury.
- 3.4 These successes, along with the initial engagement work, underpin the need for reinstating this work that will contribute towards the area's image and beauty. We believe that this is a crucial opportunity to deliver pride in our areas of Gwynedd. By adopting these working methods, we can target the high risk areas, thereby making a significant and visible difference in a comparatively short space of time.
- 3.5 Evidently the success of the above method of working depends on forging partnerships and close collaboration with community councils and other local stakeholders. As part of the Clean and Tidy Communities scheme we will hold a further consultation to nurture relationships and find out exactly what needs to be targeted within the various communities.

4. THE RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 4.1 A significant contribution to the department's improvement priorities, namely Clean and Tidy Communities and Strengthening Communication and Engagement.
- 4.2 To deliver the vision within the Council's Plan 2018-23, 'for every community in Gwynedd to prosper' for the people to 'enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives' by 'taking advantage of the beauty of the County's natural environment'.
- 4.3 To facilitate physical improvements to the built environment within and in the vicinity of Gwynedd's towns and villages, by focusing on public open spaces, e.g. roads, streets, parks, promenades, etc.
- 4.4 Promote local ownership and foster pride in the area by working at a community level to foster relationships with local groups/organisations, volunteers and the third sector.
- 4.5 An opportunity to integrate the work of the Highways and Municipal department by establishing the teams within the Street Services Team. Although the teams will sit within the Street Services Team, we will consider the teams as an integral part of each service within the department.
- 4.6 Enable the main workforce to focus on the rolling work and programmed work.
- 4.7 Inclusive teams within community boundaries would reduce the need to use various means of transport, which is more sustainable.

5. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

Organisation of the Teams and Management/Supervision Arrangements

- 5.1 Simply, the teams include two individuals in a small lorry. It is intended to provide each team with a set of appropriate equipment and materials to undertake a variety of minor works. To ensure that the team vehicles can be recognised in the communities, it is intended to use a different colour and logo to the normal maintenance vehicles, e.g. Clean and Tidy Communities, telephone number, etc.
- 5.2 Based on previous experience, we suggest establishing two teams within Meirionnydd and Arfon, and one team in Dwyfor. As part of arranging the programme of work, a Team Leader will be appointed. This work will be based on the requests made by local members, community councils and any other partners that express an interest during the consultation period.
- 5.3 It is intended to hold consultation sessions within the department in order to ensure that managers and the workforce have an opportunity to express their views on the type of work that needs to be targeted, and the best way of delivering it.
- 5.4 We will also take advantage of new/mobile technology to respond to minor problems swiftly and effectively. We will provide each team with a tablet/mobile phone to program their work. This will enable the teams to update requests/queried from the public and establish strong communication and engagement streams.

5.5 Remit of Community Teams

Here is an initial draft list:

- Emphasis on urban and busy rural locations
- Cut and move urban weeds and specific overgrowth
- Cleaning and minor maintenance of street signs and street names
- Cleaning and painting of benches, bollards and other street furniture
- Wash, repairing and installing street bins and dog fouling bins
- Needle collection, in addition to, not to replace, the Street Cleaning work
- Remove graffiti, stickers and posters from Council property
- Other minor repairs and painting jobs
- Respond to relevant deficiencies, damage and vandalism on Council property
- Deep Cleaning - cleaning streets and removing gum
- Clearing specific cases of illegal tipping or dumping (responsive and in addition to, but not to replace, the Street Cleaning work).
- Emergency role - work in conjunction with other gangs as an emergency response, e.g. flooding, snow.
- Winter maintenance - the team will be available to support this work
- Minor drainage works - cleaning and trimming overgrowth from roadside drains and channels
- Siding - where relevant (e.g. urban)
- Tidying road verges
- Emptying bins when overcrowded at busy times.

5.6 Measuring Performance

- In introducing any new initiative, it is essential that we establish measures in order to regularly challenge our performance.
- We believe that the best way to assess the value of this service is to listen to the views of residents of our communities. Therefore, we plan on establishing a monthly customer satisfaction measure so that we can track our performance and respond quickly where necessary.
- Other measures are also to be piloted to find the most suitable and reliable measures.

5.7 Financial implications

- An initial bid for funding of the teams was submitted for an initial 3 year period - £1,523,730
- It is important to note that we are hoping to fund this scheme soon, as it is a very high priority.
- As a result, we cannot wait for the 2022/23 budget and therefore the Cabinet will need to pre-judge the bidding process (i.e. approve this plan without weighing against other bids).

Workers-

Project Officer /
 Team Lead Contact
 Team Leader
 5x Community Team
 Overtime (10%)
 Training

£397,830**Transport-**

5 3.5T vehicles
 1 van
 (we aim for these
 vehicles to be
 completely green)

£85,080**Supplies and
Services-**

Minor Equipment
 and tools
 Sacks
 Safety clothing and
 footwear
 Mobile Phones
 Disposal etc.

£25,000

Sub Total			£507,910
Total			£1,523,730

5.8 Management and Timetable

A single point of contact will manage the project on a day-to-day basis and communicate with Members and Community Town Councils to ensure a work program for implementation. This role is essential and will work closely with the Communications Team.

Timetable - If Cabinet approves the establishment of the Clean and Tidy Communities team, we intend to see it operational early in the new year.

5.9 Well Being of Future Generations

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act seeks to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Preparation of the proposal has taken place addressing the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the requirement it places on public bodies to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities, and to prevent ongoing problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

6. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

6.1 'Our Area 2032' consultation (see the details in point 2.1).

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Our Area (Clean and Tidy Communities comments).

7. VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

The Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

Head of Finance:

I note that the financial requirement is clear in the second phase of the decision sought, which is a request for Cabinet to approve the allocation of £1,523,730 from the Transformation Fund now, in order to fund the team and their associated costs on a one-off basis for a period of three years.

It is a matter for the Cabinet to prioritize the use of the Transformation Fund. While the fund is well resourced, other applications will follow. Therefore, should this substantial application be granted, Cabinet should be convinced that this need is a high priority.