
Communities Scrutiny Committee 4 November 2021

Present:

COUNCILLORS: Stephen Churchman, Glyn Daniels, Elwyn Edwards, Simon Glyn, Annwen Hughes, Berwyn Parry Jones, Elwyn Jones, Dafydd Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Elfed P. Roberts, Angela Russell, Mike Stevens, Gethin Williams and Owain Williams.

Officers present:

Llywela Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor), Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Advisor) and Natalie Jones (Democracy Service Officer).

Present for item 5:

Councillor Gareth Griffith (Cabinet Member for the Environment), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment), Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment), and Rebeca Jones (Joint Planning Policy Unit Manager).

Present for item 6:

Councillor Gareth Griffith (Cabinet Member for the Environment), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department) and Wyn Williams (Countryside Manager).

Present for item 7:

Dewi Wyn Jones (The Council's Business Support Service Manager).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Linda Morgan, Kevin M Jones, Aled Wyn Jones and Dyfrig Siencyn (Council Leader).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest or relevant dispensations were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 23 September 2021 as a true record.

5. JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW REPORT

A report was submitted by the Cabinet Member - Environment noting that this report before the Committee was to receive the members comments.

The Joint Planning Policy Unit Manager explained that it was a requirement for the Council to prepare a brief review report and include some certain matters e.g. information that will be considered to guide the Local Development Plan.

Reference was made to Appendix 1 and it was noted that it was split into 6 parts. All the parts were discussed thoroughly by explaining the purpose of each one.

The next steps were discussed, namely that a 6-week public consultation would take place before a final report would be brought before the Full Council. The Committee was asked to consider the draft review report and offer comments on matters that need reviewing while preparing the amended plan.

During the discussion the following observations were made:

- It was asked why the Council was joint planning with Anglesey as no other counties in Wales collaborate in the same manner. It was noted that Gwynedd has its unique needs and deserves its own plan.
- Reference was made to page 53 of the programme where it was noted that the housing provision has fallen under the target.
- It was noted that there was an impact on communities as the Wylfa plans were no longer proceeding and it was suggested that the number of houses designated within the plan be subject to conditions regarding developing without endangering communities.
- Questions were raised regarding demolition and re-building of houses much larger than the original ones. Although more expensive to buy, these houses are more cost effective,
- Concern was raised regarding building houses without need and it was noted that they were not affordable for the majority of Gwynedd and Anglesey residents.
- The review was welcomed and the other members comments were agreed regarding the need for new houses as Gwynedd and Anglesey's population was static.
- It was suggested that an affordable local housing market was needed across the counties and not in some areas alone as evidence showed that housing was out of reach to most local people.
- Enquiries were made regarding 'ScottishPower's' pilot scheme as there was fuel poverty in Penllyn, but it was not included in the plan.
- Pride was noted as consideration was being given to biodiversity, however, attention was drawn to the lack of discussion in the AONB area.
- A point was raised regarding using local materials for example local slate on houses built - to ensure work in the quarry and that money stays local.
- Disappointment was expressed that it was not possible for children of farming families to stay in their homes as it was not possible for them to build houses on the land. It was added that this leads to farms being sold.

In response the Officers noted the following:

- They agreed that the situation was different by now following the news that the Wylfa development would not proceed and this would be included when amending the plan.
- It was noted with assurance that firm evidence would be needed in order to develop houses and that there was local need for them.
- They added that it was very relevant from every aspect of the new plan for all types of developments to meet the Council's carbon requirements.
- The Committee was reminded that a paper had been brought before them regarding second homes and consequently a report was presented to the Senedd.

- It was noted that information regarding the 'ScottishPower' plan was on their website in order to receive further information on the areas that are a part of the plan.
- The member's point on the use of local materials was recognised, however, it was noted that it was unlawful to set conditions on materials and only a condition in terms of ensuring the material is similar in terms of appearance was possible.
- It was suggested that the members should participate in the consultation in order to voice their opinions on the points raised in the Committee today that are beyond the report's remit.

DECISION

To accept the report and note the observations received.

6. RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The discussion was opened by the Cabinet Member for the Environment by noting that the purpose of the final draft was to receive comments from members of the Committee.

The report was presented by the Countryside Manager by noting that a public consultation would follow after the comments on the final draft plan. Reference was made to factors that are highlighted in the report which are alterations to access programme, additional resources and grants for the service.

He noted that the action points will continue as they were and these will lead the work. He added that there will be no need to prepare detailed work programmes, however, it will need to be done every one or two years.

During the discussion the following observations were made:

- Enquiries were made regarding how the scheme was currently working, are there any problems for example some landowners refusing to comply.
- Thanks were given for the report and it was asked what are the requirements of the Disabilities Act in relation to access to the network pathways.
- It was suggested that the Council should have a record on their website that notes the accessibility of the network for people with disabilities.
- It was asked how much progress has been done in assessing pathways, by referring to the 2004/5 report and noting that 25% of the network was assessed at that time.
- It was reiterated that minor adaptations will make a world of difference to the disabled, by referring to a local complaint of a member who asked for guidance on starting a path in the ward in order to facilitate accessibility for a blind person.
- Thanks was expressed for all the work by noting that miles of paths need assessing and therefore recognition was expressed as it was a challenging task. Reference was made to the enjoyment people had experienced walking these paths during the lockdown periods.
- This was reiterated, noting that it would be useful, if possible to record the number of path users.
- Enquiries were made regarding the paths that had not been open for some time due to lack of maintenance.
- A report should be submitted to the Committee to give an update on the condition of the network in the near future.

In response, the Countryside Manager noted:

- As a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) open land was established for access to the uplands and also schemes that targeted the agricultural sector with grants following this. He reiterated that the field is currently being assessed following 'Brexit'.
- On access and accessibility matters, that the landscape differs and that there are some situations where the paths are on uneven ground in terms of access. He reiterated that an opportunity following a grant programme to improve pathways and the network, in this case would hopefully facilitate access for everyone. He referred to an example which was removing stiles in order to ensure accessibility.
- The department was looking at ways to improve information on the network as there was not much information to give regarding the current condition of the network. He added that it needs to be established which are easy paths and open for use.
- The Head of the Environment Department added that the National Park had improved their paths and the department would collaborate with the Park to plan information for the accessibility of Gwynedd's paths.
- The department would certainly consider the options that are available to improve accessibility, however, he reiterated that the size of the network and the number of staff was a challenge.

DECISION

a) To accept the final draft plan and note the observations received and incorporate them in the document for public consultation.

b) To accept the report following the consultation period and to note the observations received.

7. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS OF THE GWYNEDD AND ANGLESEY PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD, AND PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WELL-BEING ASSESSMENT

The report was submitted by the Council's Business Support Service Manager.

It was discussed that the housing sub-group on the board has come to an end as their purposes had been fulfilled.

It was explained that there had been much progress in prioritising the Welsh language - a project would be joint-funded to see why a number of Welsh people choose not to use the Welsh language when contacting wider local bodies.

It was explained that a pilot scheme was in progress with the Climate Change project in the Porthmadog area, it was explained that it was proposed to expand the areas further in the future.

It was noted that the work of the Well-Being Assessment was progressing. There was a well-being assessment in 2017 amongst the areas. It was asked that this assessing work be completed every 5 years, which is why the assessing has started again. This year, the assessing work was in accordance with the Regeneration Framework, which was a consultation plan currently underway in Gwynedd. It was hoped that this assessment would be completed by the end of the financial year. A further plan will follow.

The Board was proposing for the reports to be offered every 6 months rather than the present procedure to report three times yearly.

During the discussion the following observations were made by officers in response to members' comments:

- it was noted that the sub-group which is coming to an end may be re-purposed to get more use out of their information.
- It was explained that further discussions with the community in the consultation project will note if priority needs to be given to the community's Economy, and Climate in the same way.

DECISION

a) To accept the report and to note the observations received

b) Agree to scrutinise the Board's work twice a year.

8. THE AMENDED SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22

The amended work programme was submitted to the Committee for acceptance. It was noted that the items 'Climate Change' and 'Update – Salt Bins' were added to the work programme For discussion in the Committee on the 10th or March 2022.

In response to comments from a member or the committee regarding the scrutiny of the item 'Update – Salt Bins', the Scrutiny Advisor noted they would be in contact with the Department in order to receive confirmation of the proposed plan.

DECISION

To approve the amended work programme.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 a.m. and concluded at 12.35 p.m.

Chairman