



CYNGOR GWYNEDD – Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Title of item:	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Highways, Engineering and YGC
Cabinet Member:	Cllr. Berwyn Parry Jones
Relevant Officer:	Sara Marged Jones (Project Manager)
Date of meeting:	19 September, 2023

1. The decision sought:

To accept and note the information in the report.

2. The reason why the Cabinet needs to make the decision:

In order to ensure effective performance management.

3. Introduction and Rationale

3.1 The purpose of this report is to update my fellow members on what has taken place in the areas within my remit as Cabinet Member for Highways, Engineering and YGC. This report will outline the following:-

- What has been achieved as part of the priorities of the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2018-2023:
- Where are the performance measurements
- The latest in terms of savings and cuts schemes

4. 2018-23 Council Plan Projects

As a department we led on the two improvement priorities within the Council Plan 2018-23 and I summarise what has been achieved thus far, as follows:

4.1 Clean and Tidy Communities

4.1.1 It is true to note that elements of all the department's services contribute to creating a clean and tidy Gwynedd. However, an integral part of this priority was to establish five 'Ardal Ni' Tidying-up Teams. The Teams have been fully operational since the middle of summer 2022 and have undertaken work that contributes to improving the appearance and image of our streets and our environment. We are pleased to report that the Teams have received very positive feedback from members, Community and Town Councils and local residents.

4.1.2 In order to realise what was promised within our Cabinet report and make the best use of IT technology, we have introduced a digital form to receive requests for work submitted by local members. Since September 2022, the Teams have on average received 48 requests per month. These applications are part of the responsive work of the Teams and additional to their cyclical work. We see a great value in our digital form and the contingency system as it allows the Project Officer/Team Leader to respond to them promptly and forward them to the relevant Team's mobile tablet. Mobile tablets enable the Teams to update the applications by attaching photographs of their work while they work in our communities.

4.1.3 A 'hub' was developed for the teams within the Members Portal. Access is given to all the following information via the 'hub':

- Digital form (request for work)
- The teams' circuits on an interactive map
- Customer satisfaction questionnaire
- Photographs/details of the teams' latest work.

4.1.4 The Teams' main principle is to go a step further than the department's cyclical maintenance with a focus on tidying and deep cleaning. A steam-powered street cleansing machine and a specialist chewing gum and graffiti removal machine were purchased to deliver this aspect.

4.1.5 Since they were founded, the work of the Teams has been promoted through the Council's social media.

4.2 Strengthening Communication and Engagement

4.2.1 The Department's work is very visual with aspects of the service touching all residents throughout the County. Therefore, the need to promote this work using a wide range of communication streams was recognised.

4.2.2 A Communications and Engagement Officer has been appointed to undertake the work that was part of this priority. We are constantly sharing new developments and raising awareness of the services' work via social media. We have also developed a department newsletter that is shared quarterly with staff.

4.2.3 As well as furthering the department's work, emphasis was placed on mapping our assets in order to add layers to Map Gwynedd whilst also designing an interactive map. We have been working on launching a map that will include assets such as salt bins for this to be operational ahead of the Winter Maintenance period. This interactive map will allow users to see the location of the assets and report any defect (e.g. refilling a salt bin).

4.2.4 The Council's Plan 2023-28 was recently published and we as a department will report and lead on the following three priorities:

- Clean and Tidy Communities
- Acting on Flood Risks (Inland and Coastal)
- Extending play/socialisation opportunities for the County's children and young people (Through working with the Education Department).

5. Other Projects

5.1 Green Fleet Plan

5.1.1 The Green Fleet Plan was adopted by the Cabinet on 24 January 2023, where it was agreed that Council Departments were not to purchase, refurbish, or dispose of any vehicle before first discussing their needs with the Fleet Manager, and obtaining his consent;

- that there is a need to create a corporate pool system instead of Departmental ones;
- that the Fleet Manager is to lead the work of weeding out the existing stock of Council vehicles and creating a vehicle structure for each Department.

5.1.2 Since the adoption of the Plan the Head of Department and the Fleet Service Manager have met with each Department in turn to discuss a range of issues such as, the delivery of the Plan, the identification of the Fleet required and ensuring that each Department works closely with the Fleet Manager. The feedback and support has been very good and everyone supports the intention which is encouraging to note.

5.1.3 We report on the progress of the Green Fleet Plan's work streams to the Climate and Nature Board with a focus on the following headings:

- The weeding process (review of the actual situation of departmental vehicles)
- Procurement (working in partnership with Local Authorities across Wales including; Health Boards, Wales Police Forces, and other public sector partners)
- Extending electric vehicle numbers as part of the Council's Fleet

5.1.4 It is important to note that obstacles have been identified to implement the first stages of the Green Fleet Plan. The following concerns were shared with the Climate Change Board for consideration:

- Lack of resources within the Fleet Service to move the Plan forward
- Charging point delivery schedule
- Cost of buying electric vehicles is high compared to the cost of buying a normal vehicle.

5.2 Fairbourne Project

5.2.1 As a Department, we closely collaborate with the 'Fairbourne Moving Forward' Project Group, examining flood risks in light of climate change factors. The Project Board 'Fairbourne Moving Forward' includes representation from several bodies, including Arthog Community Council (Chairing), Gwynedd Local Councillor, Cyngor Gwynedd (YGC, Highways, Adults, Economy, Housing and Property Departments), NRW, Community Ambassador, Public Health Wales and Welsh Water.

5.2.2 Gwynedd is leading on the People and the Built Environment Plan by working cross-departmentally. In partnership with Public Health Wales, and via a commission from Savills company the work of completing the Health Impact Assessment with the community has recently been completed. An Executive Summary has now been shared with the Welsh Government and the Member of the Senedd and the full report is about to be published.

- 5.2.3 The engagement strategy included the distribution of an online and hardcopy questionnaire, a drop-in event, interviews with key representatives from the community, and additional interviews for those interested in engaging, but unable to attend in person. The response rate amounted to 21% of all households, and approximately 15% of the total population living in Fairbourne.
- 5.2.4 The current community forums are in the process of reviewing their terms of reference to take advantage of any wider grants and charitable funds related to regeneration, sustainability and responding to the impacts of climate change.
- 5.2.5 The next important step will be to share what has been learned from the consultation with other communities in Wales and the UK, who face similar challenges.

5.3 Barmouth Project

- 5.3.1 The North Promenade is an important resource for the town as it contributes towards the tourism industry as it protects around 700 houses from flooding from the sea.
- 5.3.2 The structure has been experiencing damage and flooding from the sea for some years now. Waves frequently break over the structure, damaging the road and surrounding walls. In major storms waves can break over the whole structure, bringing a flood risk from the sea to the surrounding houses. A drop in beach level on the Northern side of the town has increased the rate of damage to the structure, and this was highlighted this year as the sea undermined the northern section and caused a road collapse.
- 5.3.3 With the effects of climate change, maintenance alone will not be sufficient to maintain an acceptable level of protection for the town. An outline business application has been approved by the Welsh Government to fund 100% and this work will start in the next few months.
- 5.3.4 Due to the scale of the project the detailed design work will take around two years looking to commence construction in the 26/27 financial year.

6. Performance

In terms of the Department's measures, I am happy with the performance that has been delivered. Nevertheless, I draw your attention to the main issues that have arisen.

6.1 Lighting Services

- 6.1.1 We are pleased to report that we have now completed the work on the LED Lamps Project on target and all Gwynedd streetlamps (17,000) have been transferred to LED technology. This project saw a 45% reduction in our energy consumption and a 70% reduction in our carbon emissions per tonne at the end of 2022/23.
- 6.1.2 Any new development will include LED technology and lighting maintenance work will still exist in accordance with existing guidelines/instructions. In addition to this, to ensure that we provide an energy/carbon efficient service, we are also dimming the lights within the County's estates/villages to use 25% less kwh per hour between 10:30pm and 6:00am.

- 6.1.3 Once this work has been completed, our electricians will play an integral role in installing charging points across the County.
- 6.2 Highway Maintenance Service
 - 6.2.1 The work of updating our Highway Assets Support Plan which reflects the new requirements of the Code of Practice with an emphasis on risk management, has been completed. As part of this review we have re-visited our roadside maintenance and hazardous incident response period arrangements. These arrangements will ensure improved efficiency in organising response work within the County.
 - 6.2.2 Another change to the manual is our County road resurfacing work programming regime. A priority programme will be developed on the basis of technical knowledge derived from the assets system with area input into the subsequent list.
 - 6.2.3 In addition to the above developments, preparatory work for the winter maintenance season has been completed in all operational areas in response to this challenging period.
- 6.3 Street Scene Service
 - 6.3.1 As part of the restructuring, it was decided to incorporate the Street Cleaning Service, Street/Enforcement Services and Tidying-up Teams into one Street Scene Service to improve the cleanliness, tidiness and safety of the local built environment.
 - 6.3.2 **Street Cleaning Service** - This service is responsible for sweeping County streets and removing rubbish, leaves or any other items from public places that may pose a risk to public health and safety and affect the appearance of the local built environment.
 - 6.3.3 A review was recently undertaken of the service. In terms of the methodology of the review, rather than following a specific programme of audits of the current operation of the Service, research was carried out in the form of informal interviews/discussions with the workforce, team leaders, the former manager, and other Council managers and officers to gain a perception of how the service operates and whether or not it is efficient. The method of the research was similar to that used in the Ffordd Gwynedd exercises to identify false steps in operating processes.
 - 6.3.4 **Street Services / Enforcement** - Additional Wardens have been appointed to address the problems that have arisen since the emergency period where more litter, overflowing bins and problems of dog faeces appear to have increased. Our Wardens have been busy raising awareness and patrolling problem communities across the County.
 - 6.3.5 We received the results of the 2022/23 'Keep Wales Tidy' independent survey at the end of July. It is noted within this survey that 141 individual cross-sections were inspected and 95% of these streets were awarded grade B or above, which are streets that are considered to have an acceptable level of cleanliness by the public.
 - 6.3.6 **'Ardal Ni' Tidying-up Team** - An overview of the Tidying-up Team's work is given in 4.1. It is fair to note that the work of the teams has had a positive impact on the County's cleanliness.

6.4 Public Toilets

6.4.1 The Council has 66 public toilets in Gwynedd and two have recently reopened at the request of our communities. To date, we have upgraded ten toilets by means of grant schemes and there may be potential to upgrade three other toilets over the next two years via grants.

6.4.2 It is important to note that there has been pressure on the Service to recruit and appoint in this field and we are still endeavouring to attract staff to these essential and important posts. The Service is facing several challenges in terms of increased use and anti-social behaviour in some cases that have increased in recent years.

6.4.3 Looking to the future it will be a statutory requirement for us to review the Public Toilets Strategy.

6.5 Risk Register

6.5.1 The Department has a number of high-level risks and it is essential that these are regularly reviewed. These risks have been recorded in the Corporate Risk Register. As part of the Performance Measurements procedure, these high-level risks have been discussed to identify any actions. Emphasis is placed on the connection of our department's Risk Register and Business Plan in the future.

6.6 Gwynedd Consultancy (YGC)

6.6.1 **Commercial Work** - The commercial work is achieved by bringing together all the engineering, technical and scientific expertise and skills to meet the needs of the client by forming project teams. The projects call for expertise in many work fields, because projects are different in nature, and an action plan is provided for each project. Also, the intention is for each plan to be measured in terms of customer satisfaction.

6.6.2 The four services are:

- Water and Environment
- Building and Infrastructure
- Business and Project Delivery
- Technical

6.6.3 Several schemes were completed during last year, such as repairing Aberdyfi wharf, improvements to the A55 in the Abergwyngregyn area, Hirael Flood Prevention Scheme and work on Bodefail bridge.

6.6.4 Environmental and sustainability issues influence all kinds of developments. The environmental team is working on several schemes. They carry out environmental assessments on a number of schemes to ensure that natural habitats and species are protected, as well as providing environmental improvement measures. In addition, the team is taking advantage of opportunities to add elements that increase biodiversity on plans.

- 6.6.5 YGC places a high priority on staff training and leads regionally on the North Wales Regional Professional Training Agreement on engineering work through the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE). This will enable officers to develop their skills and work on more challenging schemes. In addition, encouragement and investment is core to promoting staff to successfully seek other professional memberships including Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and Chartered Institution of Water and Environment Management (CIWEM). Staff are also aware that professional qualifications are key to attracting and getting work, which is why 54% of YGC staff are members of professional bodies.
- 6.6.6 **Undertake statutory functions in water and flood control** - During the last year the Service has been working on developing several flood risk management plans, including Aqueduct Gardens - Barmouth, North Promenade - Barmouth, Hirael - Bangor, Ogwen Catchment Scheme, Gwyrfai Catchment Scheme and Clynog Fawr. As well as a series of smaller scale schemes in the Bethesda and Barmouth and Blaenau Ffestiniog areas.
- 6.6.7 Construction has finished on a flood and coastal erosion risk management scheme in Porthdinllaen and Aberdyfi Wharf.
- 6.6.8 Inspections of our coastal assets allow us to identify the condition of our assets and programme maintenance as needed. Repairs to some faulty assets have been programmed and the Department continues in the meantime to monitor the assets.
- 6.6.9 Investigating flood incidents is our statutory duty under the Flood and Water Management Act. To date, we are aware of 46 properties that have experienced internal flooding. Researching and recording these incidents is key to supporting requests for capital funding to develop business cases for flood risk management plans.
- 6.6.10 Work to approve Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) applications is continuing and the number of applications is stable but reflect the recent situation in property construction and improvement. There are two full-time officers working in the department, along with support from other teams within YGC. We also provide an advisory service on SuDS applications to the Isle of Anglesey Council.

7. Department's Accreditations

- 7.1 Investors in People Accreditations (IIP) - In 2022/23, the YGC Service received an "Investors in People" accreditation for the third time. The IIP report and the action plan will weave into the Service business plan.
- 7.2 BSI accreditations - The Department has managed to retain the following accreditations following the yearly BSI management audit:
- BSI 9001
 - BSI 1401
 - BSI 4501
- 7.3 These accreditations are crucial and essential to the work of services across the department.

8. Financial Position

8.1 Savings Position

The Department has carried out the majority of saving plans for 2023/24, with a delay in one plan worth £5,000 but with no concern about its delivery. The Department's current savings target for 2024/25 is £390,000.

9. Views of the Statutory Officers

The Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

Head of Finance Department:

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department.