

# CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET



## Report to a meeting of the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

**Date of meeting: 7 November 2023**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn and Councillor Nia Jeffreys**

**Contact Officer: Sioned Williams**

**Contact Number: 01286 679547**

**Subject: CHALLENGE PERFORMANCE REPORT - CABINET MEMBERS FOR ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY**

### **THE DECISION SOUGHT**

To accept and note the information in the report.

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### **THE REASONS WHY A DECISION IS NEEDED**

In order to ensure effective performance management

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update our fellow members on developments in the fields within our remit as Cabinet Members for Economy and Community. This will include outlining the latest developments against pledges within the 2023-28 Cyngor Gwynedd Plan; the progress of performance measures; and the latest on the savings and cuts plans.

## **2. PROJECTS OF THE CYNGOR GWYNEDD PLAN 2023-2028 (Improvement Priorities)**

2.1 The table in APPENDIX 1 gives an update on the progress of the Department's three priority projects which have been identified in the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 under the section **A Prosperous Gwynedd - Strengthening the economy and supporting the people of Gwynedd to earn a worthy wage.**

2.2 From this information you will note that the Department has made good progress against all milestones for the first year of the Plan 2023/24.

## **3. PERFORMANCE OF DEPARTMENT SERVICES**

3.1 The Department's Performance Dashboard is reviewed regularly. There was an opportunity to scrutinise the performance of the various services at a special meeting on 27 September and we would like to draw the attention of Cabinet Members to the following matters:

## Leisure Resources Service

- 3.2 In addition to managing country parks, the Service is responsible for managing and monitoring Cyngor Gwynedd's agreement with Cwmni Byw'n Iach to deliver a service in our leisure centres, promote sports, active activities and healthy living. Cwmni Byw'n Iach's Quarter 2 Monitoring Report shows that the performance has been positive since the beginning of the year and exceeds what had been depicted as the best scenario in the Business Plan which was presented to the Council back in February 2023. As a general indicator, by the end of quarter 2 of this year there were 434,000 visits to the centres, which is an increase of 45,000 compared to quarter 2 last year. We now estimate a deficit of £346k at the end of the year compared with £551k at the end of 2022/23. The projected deficit is approximately £90k better than what was included as the best scenario in the Business Plan. This is also an improvement of £30k compared to the Quarter 1 Monitoring Report.
- 3.3 The flow of income has regrown faster in some fields than others. Swimming in general is a sector that has seen a strong recovery and work has been carried out across the county to increase the level of income from swimming lessons to its highest level ever. At present, the number of children receiving swimming lessons is 16% higher than the pre-Covid level. This has been possible based on the high level of demand that has resulted from the Covid years as well as significant efforts by the company to recruit and train new swimming instructors.
- 3.4 Fitness income continues to increase year on year too, and follows the usual seasonal pattern of the sector. However, growth in this sector is dependent on significant investment in fitness equipment over the next few years.
- 3.5 The membership level is now at 86% of the pre-Covid level (compared to 75% this time last year). When the centres were closed in March 2020, the level of Direct Debit membership was at an all-time high and had risen due to a significant investment in new equipment. That level had been reached as a result of annual growth over a decade. The pandemic led to the end of regular payments and an opportunity for members to decide whether they wanted to remain members immediately upon re-opening. A percentage of the population was naturally concerned at that point and had decided to suspend their contracts, at least temporarily, and it was not possible to regain these customers immediately. Projections indicate that the number of customers will be restored in 2024/25.
- 3.6 The Company continues to work hard to recover, but it is also important to note that many challenges remain, including the cost-of-living crisis. This puts pressure on the ability of local residents to spend on non-essential services, such as leisure. The growth that has taken place so far has come about during an extremely challenging period for households and the sector.
- 3.7 Wage inflation in the public sector and beyond is an additional challenge. The service has traditionally increased fees to close the gap for wage inflation. Due to the increase in the cost of living, however, the ability to increase fees without excluding key cohorts of customers is more difficult.

### **Maritime Services, Hafan Pwllheli and Victoria Dock Caernarfon.**

- 3.8 New customer satisfaction questionnaires for users of Gwynedd's harbours and beaches have been prepared and were implemented from July 2023. More than 200 signs with QR codes for quick access to the questionnaires were located in strategic points to try to encourage users to complete them.

**Harbours** - the number of customers with a mooring agreement in our harbours this year is 4% higher than in 2022, which is an increase from 240 to 250 (not including Pwllheli and Caernarfon), with the biggest increase in Barmouth harbour (11+). 89% of harbour customer satisfaction questionnaire respondents considered their experience to be 'Very Good' (56%) or 'Good' (33%) with a majority stating that the harbours were clean and tidy and that the staff were pleasant, professional and knowledgeable. No one thought the services was 'Poor' or 'Very Poor', but there was good feedback on specific events and improvements needed to structures such as the condition of the Aberdyfi harbour office.

**Beaches** - 75% of the respondents considered their experience of the beaches to be 'Very Good' (59%) or 'Good' (16%), and of the 177 respondents 30% indicated that Beach Wardens were helpful, professional and knowledgeable. Positive comments were also received about the safety of the beaches, specifically effective management of powerboats, accessibility, cleanliness and quality of bathing water. Some noted that dog fouling on beaches was a problem, that there was a lack of litter bin provision in some locations and that the quality of cleanliness and the condition of some public toilets needed to be improved. Some of the respondents were of the opinion that the beaches were "too busy" with many noting that there were too many jet skis in our main destinations (mainly Abersoch beach). 1509 watercraft had registered with the Council this year, 129 more than the total for 2022.

**Hafan Pwllheli and Victoria Dock** – 100% of Hafan Pwllheli and Victoria Dock moorings are full. It is worth noting that an increase in the cost of living has led to a number of customers in Pwllheli cancelling their contract for the next year, citing their decision to give up sailing. Although the waiting list is strong at the moment, many have been removing their names from the reserve list and we will monitor this situation carefully. We will report to the Cabinet further over the coming months on the long-term investment requirements needed by the Hafan and Victoria Dock over the next few years to ensure the safety and viability of the service.

### **Archives**

- 3.9 On average during the period from June to August, 92% of users of the service were 'Very Satisfied' with the Service, 4% of users were 'Satisfied' and 2% of users stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 2% were 'Not Satisfied'. The reasons mainly stemmed from the fact that the Record Office had been closed for extensive periods due to electrical work and that a limited service had been available during the period. But there were also issues arising from users' requests to take photos of archival material and the copyright implications - the service has responded and hopes to be able to allow this before the end of October.

### **Museums and Arts**

- 3.10 The Lloyd George Museum was closed until the end of July 2023 due to the repair work after the flooding. This has affected visitor numbers and also the feedback on the service. The Theatre remains closed and is unavailable for hire/use. Further investment work is being prepared for the site for 2024/25.

- 3.11 We will review Storiell's business plan over the coming months and work closely with Bangor University to see how we can strengthen the relationship, especially in the food and drink offer and when marketing the resource to a new audience.

### **Libraries**

- 3.12 This year's April-August lending performance is correspondingly higher than last year's figures with 125,220 loans compared to 122,453 in 2022/23. There is also an increase in active users figures in August this year which is 6481 compared to 6015 in August 2022. This is partly due to efforts to organise a series of activities aimed at children and families during the summer holidays.
- 3.13 In addition to running the Summer Reading Challenge, 68 free activities were offered in each of the 13 libraries, as well as providing seven activities in the Council's stand during National Eisteddfod week in Boduan. We also distribute (reusable) menstrual products for free and since April this year, we have distributed 1370 items to women across the county, with the majority delivered to the home through our direct delivery system.
- 3.14 One significant thing we have noticed in recent months (May-August) are three different comments thanking the Library Service and the service staff in particular, which refer to the positive impact that visiting the library and getting support from staff has had on the well-being and mental health of the individuals. The three comments received were heartfelt, and all three had been through challenging and difficult times in their lives.
- 3.15 Between April and July, 200 one-to-one Digital Support sessions were provided at the request of Gwynedd residents. We are still waiting for a decision on the Circular Economy grant application to allow the Petha (Library of Things) scheme to restart in the Libraries. Until a decision is made, responsibility for the Petha entity cannot be transferred to Benthylg Cymru, which is necessary from the point of view of data protection and insurance considerations.
- 3.16 Satisfaction surveys are carried out five times a year by sampling in different libraries. In 2022/23, 97% of users questioned were 'completely satisfied' with the service they received. In the June and September survey this year, it was found that 99% were 'completely satisfied'. The following comment was recently received:
- 'I live in Bangor, and have no computer, so the library in Bangor is very important to me. The response from staff is always the same – "leave it with us" and they always get it done. I rely on the book delivery service. I would like you to pass on my comments to everyone – the staff but also Councillors and those high up in the Council. We need more people who enjoy their job and appreciate what they do. Whenever I phone they are always helpful and it's these small things that make a huge difference. Books have given me so much joy and reading is important to me. Without people like those working in libraries, the whole system [societal] would collapse – it really would.'*

### **Neuadd Dwyfor**

- 3.17 Since April this year, depending on the sample questioned, the satisfaction rate varies from 78% (May) to the highest 94% (June and August). There was an excellent response rate in August from 160 users and the week of the Eisteddfod proved to be a very successful week.

3.18 The complimentary comments indicate that users are generally happy with the customer care, the variety in the programme and the improvements made to the building in general. They enjoyed the experience of visiting Neuadd Dwyfor. Sometimes there are negative comments because they didn't enjoy the show or the film, but there is nothing we can do about that! However, the negative comments in all refer to:

- Problems with tickets or booking - we will look at these in more detail
- Noisy or disruptive behaviour by other users
- Uncomfortable seats - unfortunately this was part of the work carried out during the improvement project.

#### **4. THE SAVINGS SITUATION**

4.1 The Department has a plan which was supposed to generate savings of £100,000 in 2022/23 - 2024/25, namely the Neuadd Dwyfor remodelling scheme. The COVID-19 crisis led to a delay in realising the development work in the Neuadd. With the restoration work continuing, it is difficult at present to see the long-term impact on the numbers visiting the Neuadd. It is clear that the crisis and increase in living costs, along with other factors such as the new form of watching films, with a large number of people awaiting the release of films on the internet/television, raises a concern in terms of the ability to fully implement the savings.

4.2 One saving plan continues from previous years (a total of £45,000), which is subject to permission to increase fees as part of a parking review. The arrangements are dependent on developing the Dinas Dinlle site in the hope that work will start in the coming weeks.

4.3 Excluding savings from previous historic plans set out in 4.1 and 4.2, there are a total of £242,180 for 2023/24 and £41,130 programme for 2024/25, and all have been realised or are on track to be completed on time.

#### **5. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

5.1 We will continue to monitor the performance of the various services on a monthly basis and a special meeting of the Department's Management Team has been arranged for 24 January 2024, where representatives from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee will be in attendance.

#### **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 Economy and Community Department".*

## APPENDIX 1

### PROJECTS OF THE CYNGOR GWYNEDD PLAN 2023-2028 (Improvement Priorities)

The following table gives an update on the progress of the Department's three priority projects which have been identified in the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 under the section **A Prosperous Gwynedd - Strengthening the economy and supporting the people of Gwynedd to earn a worthy wage:**

Projects	Overview	What we want to achieve during the <b>FIRST</b> year 2023-24 (milestones):	September 2023 Update
<b>Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy</b>	<p>We will take a series of measures to promote our culture and create a sustainable visitor economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan, formed jointly with the Eryri National Park Authority, will be launched in spring 2023. The principal partners and stakeholders will collaborate to deliver what will be in the Plan by establishing a Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership.</li> </ul>	We will launch a Gwynedd and Eryri Plan 2035.	Plan launched on 25 September 2023.
		We will establish a Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership 2035.	Task and Finish Group established, draft terms of reference agreed, first meeting to be held before the end of October 2023.
		We will develop and implement a Gwynedd and Eryri Action Plan 2035.	Partnership to discuss and establish an Action Plan before the end of March 2024.
		We will approve an Action Plan that identifies a lead body to deliver priorities.	Following the launch, work will begin on developing the Action Plan with the new Partnership as one of its main initial tasks.
		We will develop and embed the formal collaboration arrangements between the Council and the National Park.	Formal meetings are held between the Park and the Council. A Steering Board has been established and an operating structure for officers is in place.
		We will adopt balanced measures and establish formal monitoring arrangements.	A draft performance measurement dashboard discussed at the Steering Board between the Council and the Park on 13-09-23.
		We will establish Leaders within the Gwynedd and Eryri communities.	This element will be part of the Action Plan to be developed with the Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 Partnership.
		We will administrate relevant funding pots deriving from the Shared Prosperity Fund or any other sources.	<p>Funds have opened and closed for the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Culture</u> - 19 applications supported to date, worth £261,554.10</li> <li><u>Events</u> - 8 applications supported to date, worth £31,000</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will ensure prosperity from the North West Wales Slate Landscape World Heritage Site designation and secure resources to fulfil the World Heritage Site Action Plan.</li> <li>We will control Motor Homes visiting Gwynedd by piloting the development of up to six designated sites for motor homes to stay overnight.</li> <li>Hosting the 2023 National Eisteddfod in Gwynedd will be a platform to celebrate our culture and language, arts and sports and ensure that the Eisteddfod leaves a positive legacy for Gwynedd communities.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Byw'n Iach – X applications supported to date, worth £X</u></li> </ul>
	We will commence the work of consulting on the development of a Culture Plan for Gwynedd.	An initial conversation took place during the Eisteddfod in August 2023. Further developmental work to be carried out during 2024.
	We will appoint a North West Wales World Heritage Coordinator jointly with Cadw.	World Heritage Coordinator appointed jointly with Cadw.
	We will implement and monitor the Management Plan.	The work of monitoring the Management Plan takes place every quarter in meetings of the Partnership Board as well as Slate sub-groups.
	We will appoint posts to operate the Levelling Up project.	A Project Officer has been appointed to implement the project.
	We will implement the Llewyrch o'r Llechi project.	Arrangements have been established to implement the Llewyrch o'r Llechi project including regular meetings of the Project Board and with partners.
	We will develop 4-5 Aros-fan overnight sites across Gwynedd, depending on the planning process.	Work is currently progressing to install the infrastructure in four locations. The Cricieth site to open in two weeks' time. Then Llanberis. There has been a delay in relation to utilities.
	We will hold a programme of activities during the week of the Eisteddfod. We will support communities, businesses and the cultural sector in Gwynedd to prepare for the Eisteddfod.	A full programme of activities was held in Caban Gwynedd during the week of the Eisteddfod. Due to the SPF schedule, it was not possible to support with grants before the Eisteddfod but it is planned to open an Eisteddfod endowment fund through the SPF in October.
	We will develop a platform and shop window into Gwynedd in a space on the Eisteddfod site.	<p>We succeeded in developing Caban Gwynedd and space for local businesses on the site. A very positive response was received to the Council's presence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of events were held during the Eisteddfod:</li> <li>Total number of events in the stand - 67</li> <li>Total number of events and activities in the Tipi - 38</li> <li>Number of businesses in the cabins - 11</li> </ul>

		We will carry out improvements to Neuadd Dwyfor and develop it as an important cultural centre for the Dwyfor area and beyond.	Work worth £1.5m on Neuadd Dwyfor has mostly been completed and an official opening was held on 22 June 2023 with special events and guests. There are still elements of 'snagging' that need to be undertaken before the work is fully completed.
<b>Regenerating communities and town centres</b>	We will establish a Regeneration Framework by developing Local Regeneration Plans for 13 catchment areas across the County and will ensure cross-departmental arrangements within the Council in order to ensure that work programmes intertwine and share information with communities by continuing with the engagement work. Town/City Centre action plans will be prepared for individual towns.	We will have prepared draft Local Regeneration Plans for each of the 13 local regeneration areas.	A template has been prepared, and the local plans are being drawn up. It is intended to present details to the Leadership Team in November.
		We will have held workshops in each of the local regeneration areas - to discuss and amend the draft Local Regeneration Plans; and to update local organisations on new financial schemes.	A series of workshops was organised in each of the 13 regeneration areas during May/June. The intention is to hold another cycle of workshops during 2023/24.
		We will have appointed an Empty Properties Project Manager (Economic Development Professional Trainee as part of the Cynllun Yfory programme 2023).	The appointment has been made, and the Professional Trainee started in post in September 2023.
		We will have established Key Funds to support projects within Local Regeneration Plans.	Funds have been launched and applications submitted. An assessment process will be completed during September.
		We will have established cross-departmental arrangements within the Council for monitoring and updating the Local Regeneration Plans.	Work to be completed in Q3 and Q4.
		We will have prepared Town Centre Plans for Bangor and Caernarfon.	The work of preparing the Bangor City Centre Plan has been completed. The Caernarfon Town Centre Plan is in place.
		We will have established a data baseline on empty properties for individual principal towns, and reviewed the current interventions employed by the Council Departments that deal with empty properties.	Work to be completed in Q3 and Q4.
<b>Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for businesses and</b>	We will support businesses and community enterprises in Gwynedd to thrive in many ways such as developing products and	We will have targeted funding from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund to strengthen the foundations of Gwynedd's economy.	£1.5 million was secured from the Shared Prosperity Fund to provide financial and practical support to businesses in the county through Cyngor Gwynedd.  Including the above, a total of £4.8m of the Gwynedd Shared Prosperity Fund allocation was committed to schemes under the priority of Supporting Local Businesses; including a combination of



<b>community enterprises to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work.</b>	accessing new markets, helping enterprises to save money by reducing waste and using technology better, supporting businesses in Gwynedd to trade together and prioritise helping enterprises that commit to paying a 'real living wage' to their employees. We will promote businesses to make the most of the Welsh language, to develop more work units for letting, and strive to ensure that the North Wales Growth Deal projects benefit the people of Gwynedd. In addition, we will help the people of Gwynedd to fulfil their potential and support those who are excluded from the labour market to return to employment and will work with employers to assist them to ensure they have sufficient employees.		money directly to local enterprises and funding for schemes that will provide support to our businesses.
		We will have worked together with partners across north Wales to ensure benefits to Gwynedd from the North Wales Growth Deal.	The Council continues to play a prominent and proactive role in supporting the realisation of the North Wales Growth Deal plans, paying particular attention to the plans that offer the greatest benefit to Gwynedd.
		We will have confirmed arrangements for implementing the ARFOR Programme with west Wales partners and the Welsh Government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The governance arrangements of the ARFOR Programme have been confirmed and the financial offer from the Welsh Government has been signed.</li> <li>• Contractors are in place to carry out the Llwyddo'n Lleol and ARFOR Challenge Fund schemes and to evaluate the impact of the programme.</li> <li>• In Gwynedd, the Council has allocated £967k to 18 local enterprises through the Enterprising Communities scheme.</li> </ul>
		We will have reviewed and established new arrangements for engaging with businesses and sharing information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An independent review of the business support team's engagement with local enterprises has been undertaken with recommendations for the future.</li> <li>• Additional methods of contacting the service through the website and WhatsApp have been introduced.</li> <li>• A wider engagement plan is being drawn up.</li> </ul>
		We will have launched a Business Support Fund.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New business support funds have opened at the beginning of August following securing the funding (mainly through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund).</li> <li>• A total of £1.7 million is available through two funds.</li> <li>• The demand for help from the funds has been extremely high and we have already had to delay the application procedure for smaller amounts.</li> </ul>
		We will have organised events to celebrate the accomplishments of Gwynedd businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A regular series of visits to prominent businesses in Gwynedd were programmed for Cabinet Members and five have already been held in 2023/24.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gwynedd Business Day <a href="mailto:Busnes@gwynedd.llyw.cymru">Busnes@gwynedd.llyw.cymru</a> was held on 22 May with 35 businesses attending and others joining virtually.</li> <li>• A discussion panel and a display of local businesses' products were held at the Eisteddfod.</li> </ul>
		We will have secured planning permission to develop 10 new work units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council's Cabinet has confirmed funding for the scheme in April 2023.</li> <li>• Detailed designs have been completed and a planning application submitted in July.</li> </ul>
		We will have entered an agreement with the Welsh Government to provide a Support into Work programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Communities for Work Scheme - funded through Europe - came to an end as expected in July 2023.</li> <li>• An expanded agreement to realise the Communities for Work Plus programme has been accepted by the Welsh Government which will secure £681K in 2023/24.</li> <li>• An additional £172k has been secured from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, to extend our provision to support local residents who are looking to increase their earnings up to October 2025.</li> <li>• A further £700,000 to support the residents of Gwynedd to achieve to the best of their ability in the world of work has been secured from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund until the end of 2024.</li> </ul>