

ITEM 6 – QUESTIONS

Questions by Elected Members

1. Question by Councillor Dawn Lynne Jones

Referring to the latest data on young people aged 16-25 who are sleeping rough or who have been assessed as being intentionally homeless, what assessment has the Cabinet Member made of the extent of homelessness among young people in Gwynedd?

Is he satisfied that the Council's existing policies and services are adequate, and what further action is being taken to prevent young people from becoming homeless?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, Councillor Paul Rowlinson

No young person between 16 and 25 years old has currently been identified as sleeping rough in Gwynedd. The Housing and Property Department commissions a range of housing support services specifically aimed at young people from 16 to 25 years old. These services extend from drop-in projects to mobile support in the community, offering temporary supported accommodation and then floating support in supported accommodation in the community. This range of services provides a full circle of support to young people.

The Council commissions outreach service through North Wales Housing to identify and respond to any cases of rough sleeping. If an individual is found to be sleeping rough, the outreach service makes contact and offers support to help them access housing and support services. The Council also uses the StreetLink system, which allows members of the public to bring attention to any individuals they suspect to be sleeping rough. Every StreetLink referral is considered, and where appropriate, officers or the outreach service will offer support.

GISDA and Cyfle provides floating support services to young people across the county. This support is an important part of the wider provision trying to prevent homelessness by tackling issues before they reach a crisis point. However, there are circumstances where temporary supported accommodation is required and this is commissioned from GISDA in several locations across Gwynedd. The provision includes using hostels and individual accommodation units across the county, and positive results can be seen as a result of these schemes.

Currently, Cyfle and GISDA provides drop-in services, however it was decided that this was a field in which the provision could be expanded and developed, therefore a wider, much more comprehensive drop-in service was commissioned. Following a recent tendering process, Cyfle was successful and they will be providing a county-wide drop-in service from the 1st December. Part of this contract will be seeking a better understanding of the support needs of young people and identifying opportunities to develop and further expand the service. The drop-in service will also introduce a new app for young people – “Showt” – an innovative and exciting development for the county, and we look forward to seeing it when the contract commences.

The Council also provides a SPOA (Single Point of Access) service which plays a key part in the prevention of homelessness among young people. The SPOA provides an

early intervention route which enables the identification of young people who needs support as soon as possible and refer them to the most appropriate services according to their individual needs. This can include housing advice, family mediation, mental health services, help with substance misuse, employability services, welfare advice and a range of other specialist services. By coordinating referrals and facilitating access to relevant support, the SPOA service helps to tackle problems before they develop into a housing crisis and supports young people to maintain stable accommodation wherever able.

A specific post in the Education Department focusses on prevention work in schools and other locations, aiming to identify risks early, and support individuals before their situations worsens to the point of being at risk of homelessness.

I believe the housing support provision for young people is comprehensive and robust in Gwynedd and I will ensure that the provision is reviewed regularly.

2. Question by Councillor Beca Roberts

Many of my constituents have contacted me with concerns regarding the possibility of data centres being developed in Gwynedd, particularly in light of Trawsfynydd being designated as a key site within the North Wales Artificial Intelligence Growth Zone. My constituents are asking what safety measures will be in place to ensure that such developments do not become extractive only; using our land, our energy and water resources while the economic benefits largely leave the area.

Can the Cabinet Member state whether the Council is developing any framework or specific expectations for data centre developments in Gwynedd so that if these developments come here, they will secure real and permanent benefits for our communities? Specifically, how will the Council ensure that expectations in terms of local economic benefit, employment, infrastructure and the use of local resources are met, and how will the Council seek to ensure that any developments are proportionate to the needs and priorities of Gwynedd communities rather than mainly serving an external demand?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Economy and Community, Councillor Medwyn Hughes

There is no framework in place yet for the development of data centres on the Trawsfynydd Science Park site.

It is important to point out that there is no development framework in place for Data Centres in Wales at present, unlike England and Scotland. They have guidance that is used when considering planning applications.

Each application for new development on a site in Gwynedd would be assessed individually and on its merits against the policies of the Local Development Plan and national policies, assessing the relevant evidence, and taking into account all planning issues, including social, environmental and economic considerations. Therefore, by assessing all the relevant planning considerations, the potential impacts of any new development are considered as part of the process of dealing with the planning application.

Although the North Wales AI Zone application makes reference to an opportunity to consider the future development of a data centre on the Trawsfynydd site, we are not aware of any specific proposal for developing a data centre on the site at this time.

Phase one of the establishment of Trawsfynydd Science Park is to establish a Skills, Business and Innovation Centre on site. The aim of the scheme is to protect and retain high-quality jobs in Trawsfynydd; and then working with partners to identify new opportunities for the future. This centre will be a space for small businesses to establish and develop with the support of investors and specialist partners. The centre will also be a catalyst for developing different zones on the Science Park over a period of years in preparation for the time when on-site decommissioning work comes to an end. Research on science parks shows the importance of embedding the work locally and growing steadily over time; with local skills and innovation driving the work. It should be considered a long-term investment, and it can take up to 25 years to achieve its full potential.

Cyngor Gwynedd officers have begun a discussion with officers from Eryri National Park Authority to understand more about what would be suitable to develop on the site in future.

The Trawsfynydd business case shows that the identification of suitable development options for the rest of the land in order to achieve the long-term vision will take place between 2027 and 2029 and ensuring that there are clear local benefits will be central to this work.

You will recall that we adopted the Gwynedd Economy Strategy 2035 at our meeting in May. The ambition in this document is clear; to create an innovative, productive and low-carbon economy that strengthens the Welsh language, creates new opportunities and contributes to everyone's well-being. But the goal isn't just economic growth. We want to see an economy that supports our communities, retains more benefit locally, and helps people to live and thrive here in Gwynedd. This is what we will be promoting for the Trawsfynydd site.

3. Question by Councillor Elin Hywel

We know that compact, dry land that has hardened during extreme dry weather is unable to absorb water at a normal rate. We know that this significantly increases the risk of surface water when heavy rainfall follows. This year saw the driest July in 190 years. NRW declared the whole of Wales to be in drought, and this included the catchments of Gwynedd.

Although we cannot predict with certainty what the weather will bring this autumn and winter, we do know that a significant El Niño weather pattern is expected this year, and that this weather pattern increases the possibility of very rough and wet weather here in Wales. We have received several warnings from the UK government and organisations such as the Met Office to this effect.

What additional cross-departmental preparations have been made this year to respond to the known and increased risk of harsh wet weather which increases the risk of flooding – in Pwllheli in particular, and Gwynedd more widely, in light of factors such as the expected weather and the possibilities of post-drought run-off which increases the risk of severe flooding?

In addition, taking into account the Council's published position on the issue of flooding which states that "in many cases prevention is impossible" and the Council's emphasis on what we as individuals can do to prevent flooding in our homes, what communication has been planned for this year to ensure that residents understand the risk to their own property, know what to do in advance if flooding comes, and where they can get support?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Councillor June Jones

Thank you for the question. It is a valid point that soil properties can change during prolonged periods of drought, with land becoming more compacted and, in some circumstances, less able to absorb water. This can lead to a temporary increase in surface water following heavy rainfall. However, following the more unsettled and wetter conditions experienced since the end of August, it is likely that much of the ground has now returned closer to its normal condition. As we move into the winter period, the principal concern is often land that has already become waterlogged by previous rainfall and therefore has a reduced capacity to absorb further heavy rain.

In terms of the Council's preparedness, established arrangements are already in place within our highways maintenance and water asset services to enable us to respond to severe weather events and flooding incidents. In addition to these arrangements, further work has been undertaken during the year to strengthen our ability to anticipate and respond to flood risks. This includes the development of detailed area-based rainfall forecasting templates using data from monitoring systems such as Hydromaster sensors, strengthening flood asset management arrangements during events, and prioritising work programmes to improve and upgrade a number of debris screens at locations where issues have occurred in the past.

Work is also ongoing to strengthen the process for making use of information and warnings issued by the Met Office and Natural Resources Wales. While clear arrangements are already in place for responding to coastal storm events, we continue to develop our arrangements for managing the impacts of heavy rainfall. This includes exploring how historical data and local knowledge can be used to establish rainfall thresholds that are likely to trigger issues in specific areas, helping to inform operational discussions and responses at the appropriate time.

With regard to Pwllheli specifically, we are keen to ensure that local plans remain up to date and relevant. The review and updating of local community flood arrangements continues to form an important part of the Council's preparedness work, undertaken in collaboration with partner organisations.

In relation to communication with the public, we recognise the importance of ensuring that residents understand the risks relevant to their local areas and are aware of the actions they can take to prepare. We will continue to explore opportunities to work with partners such as Natural Resources Wales and the Met Office to remind residents, particularly those living in areas with a history of flooding, of the practical steps they can take ahead of the winter period. This may include directing people to information on personal flood plans, flood warning services, and sources of local support and supplies that may be of assistance should a flooding incident occur.

The Warning and Informing team within Natural Resources Wales (NRW), also manages and delivers the local flood warning service to professional partners and the public alongside incident preparedness for all incidents. They also lead on co-ordinating NRW's response post flood.

Although it is not possible to prevent every flooding event, our aim is to continue strengthening our monitoring arrangements, response procedures and engagement with communities in order to reduce risks where possible and ensure a coordinated response when severe weather events occur.

4. Question by Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts

Given that:

- The current local development plan is based on incorrect forecasts regarding population growth and the number of jobs during the plan period;
- And that Gwynedd's planning officers realise this and have conveyed it in presentations to elected members;
- And that the housing associations are scrambling to submit planning applications for social housing estates in the villages and towns of Llŷn and Eifionydd before the period of the current plan ends;
- And that the size and scale of such developments is endangering the fragile socio-linguistic fabric of those communities – Botwnnog, Nefyn, Trefor, Chwilog, Y Ffôr, Abererch – and are subject to strong local opposition;
- But that the hands of the officers and the planning committee are bound by the existing plan, although knowing that it is founded on an erroneous evidence base;

What steps are planned to be taken to break this absurd cycle of falsehood?

Answer from Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Craig ab Iago

Before responding to the question, it is important to address a misconception in some of the points raised as well as the question asked.

With regard to the (current) Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan, which was adopted by the Full Council in 2017, the Plan was based on the evidence and forecasts that were available at the time in relation to matters including population growth and job numbers. Changes in circumstance due to various reasons are inevitable during the 15 year Plan period, and there is flexibility within the Plan which means we can respond to that. That has happened and continues to happen during the Plan period, and I am confident that this is what has been conveyed in presentations to Members.

To address the thrust of the question, there is no doubt that Gwynedd is facing a housing crisis, with young families unable to access suitable housing in their communities. That includes all sorts of different homes that include open market housing, affordable housing and social housing.

As a Council, we are leading the way by ensuring that consideration of the Welsh language is a key part of local planning policies, with detailed guidance in the current Development Plan's Supplementary Planning Guidance on how to take the language into account when dealing with applications for new development.

Each application is assessed individually and on its own merits against the policies of the Local Development Plan and national policies, assessing the relevant evidence, and considering all the relevant planning issues including the need for housing and consideration of the Welsh language.

As all members will be aware, work is progressing on a new Local Development Plan and I emphasise that the Plan must be based on evidence across many areas of work, and consideration of the Welsh language will be central to its preparation.

5. Question by Councillor Gruffydd Williams

In 2020 Councillor, and former leader of Cyngor Gwynedd, Dyfrig Siencyn, Chair of the North Wales Ambition Board said: "We are delighted to support this recommendation to enable these five exciting projects to progress to the next stage of securing funding from the Growth Deal. They are all transformational projects that have the potential to contribute to the North Wales economy by bringing in additional investment and job opportunities in key sectors. The projects also reflect our vision to promote innovative and sustainable economic prosperity in the area by encouraging cooperation between the public and private sectors."

To what degree did his claims of creating up to 4,300 jobs turn out to be a huge failure?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Economy and Community, Councillor Medwyn Hughes

Ambition North Wales acknowledges that the North Wales Growth has faced many challenges and delays since the Final Deal Agreement was signed with Welsh Government and UK Government in December 2020. While some of these factors were internal including overly optimistic project timescales and planning challenges, external factors have also contributed to delays including the economic impact of Covid-19, international conflicts and cost inflation pressures. In 2025, the Economic Wellbeing Sub-Committee agreed a number of changes to the Growth Deal designed to improve the pace of delivery including the removal of stalled projects, the creation of a new reserve list of potential projects and a streamlined assurance and approval process. These changes have had a positive impact on performance with the number of business cases being approved increasing significantly.

It is important to remember that this is a 15-year programme with 10 years of investment yet to come to achieve the outcomes. As of quarter 1 2026-27, there are now 8 projects in delivery across North Wales, including the following projects within Gwynedd - Parc Bryn Cegin, Digital Signal Processing Centre and Centre for Environmental Biotechnology projects with Bangor University and the Sheep Milk Wales element of the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub. A further 10 projects have been approved for the region but are not yet in delivery. While investment and job creation figures remain relatively low at present, these will increase significantly over the next few years as the projects in delivery move through construction into their operational phases. These 18 projects have made commitments to deliver 2003 jobs by 2036 with the remainder of the target to be met by projects that are yet to be approved.

6. Question by Councillor Gwynfor Owen

There are major concerns in the Llanbedr area and more widely about what is happening at Llanbedr Airfield. The unpleasant noise that drones make while flying in circles around the village is causing great distress to residents and visitors alike. There is also concern about the military use of the site that could put Llanbedr at risk of being a target for enemies of the United Kingdom. May I therefore ask Cyngor Gwynedd what monitoring/supervision is taking place of the use of the site either by the Council or any other agency?

Answer from Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Craig ab Iago

Cyngor Gwynedd does not monitor the day-to-day activities of Llanbedr Airfield tenants or carry out direct supervision of the nature of their operations. General information is available about which companies are based on the site, but the Council does not have access to detailed information about their activities or customers.

This is partly due to confidentiality and the commercial arrangements that are in place between the landlord and the tenants. As a result, the Council is not in a position to comment in detail on the nature of the work being carried out by individual companies on the site.

On the question of monitoring or supervision of the site, the Council does not conduct a specific monitoring programme of the airfield's operational use. However, activities on the site are subject to the relevant regulatory and licensing frameworks applicable to the operators and their activities.

7. Question by Councillor Rhys Tudur

Considering the well-being of children living equally between two households and the lack of policy clarity for those circumstances, in what way will and does the Council consider the two households combined when dealing with the transport of children to school and the empty seating scheme?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

The Council recognises that an increasing number of children are living between two households and divide their time equally between the two households. In implementing the Education Transport Policy and the Empty Seating Scheme, however, there is a need to adopt a procedure that is clear, consistent and fair for all families. The policy therefore uses one primary residential address in assessing eligibility.

This approach avoids the need to try to calculate entitlements based on two addresses or a central point between two homes, which would be very complex to administrate and likely to lead to discrepancies. It is also a long-established method widely used by other local authorities.

Where a child divides their time between two households, the Council relies on the primary residential address used for administrative and educational purposes. That may include the address that is recognised on official records such as Child Benefit, school registration or other official documents. By acting on the basis of one primary address, the Council can ensure that the policy is applied consistently and fairly across the whole county.