

GWYNEDD COUNCIL

REPORT TO A MEETING OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S CABINET

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| Date of Meeting: | 18 October, 2016 |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies, Cabinet Member for Economy & Community |
| Contact Officer: | Iwan T. Jones, Corporate Director |
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| Title of Item: | Economy & Community Performance Report |

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update you on what has been achieved in the fields I am responsible for as the Cabinet Member for Economy & Community. This will include outlining the latest and the pledges in the Strategic Plan; where there are performance measures; and the latest in terms of the savings and cuts plan.
- 1.2 I will remind you that all matters have already been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised at meetings of the Economy management team, which also included a representation from the scrutiny committee.
- 1.3 On the whole, I am satisfied with the performance of most projects and measures for the Economy and Community Department.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

2.1. In order to ensure effective performance management.

3. STRATEGIC PLAN PROJECTS

3.1. T1 High Value and Quality Jobs

3.1.1. The purpose of this project is to work pro-actively in order to create the correct conditions to develop high value and quality jobs in Gwynedd.

3.1.2 Since the last meeting, the project has been focusing on two specific fields namely Energy and Digital in order to highlight opportunities and create conditions to create high value jobs. By working with the NMI gaming company and a cluster of digital projects in Parc Menai, Bangor, the project has succeeded in creating ten high value jobs since July 2016 (**High Measure 07 - Number of High Value Jobs created - Appendix 1**). A link is available to a video which shows how this work has had a positive impact on keeping our young people in the County by offering opportunities in high value fields <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2v2a3ZJq0E>. This project will focus on working with the creative sector during the next few months and attempt to attract young people to work in the field.

3.1.3 The work of responding and contributing towards the Welsh Government Task Force regarding responding to the job losses in Trawsfynydd is ongoing. The emphasis here is on ensuring high value jobs in the Trawsfynydd area as well as responding to the job losses in the area. In addition, the work of developing an application for Europe funding for Snowdonia Airspace Centre infrastructure has commenced and is gathering momentum, and the application will hopefully be submitted before Christmas.

3.1.4 A consultation process for engagement regarding the SMR in the Trawsfynydd area will commence shortly. I believe that this is an important step forward as there will be an opportunity for community councils to have an input.

3.2. T2 Keeping the Benefit Local

3.2.1 The purpose of this project is to maximise the Council's expenditure with local businesses. There are two aspects to the project, namely setting out a procurement procedure for new services and products in the Council and supporting businesses to compete and win contracts from the Council and beyond.

3.2.2 **Category Management** : A report was submitted to a meeting of the Leadership Team in September noting the Council's direction with procurement arrangements and Strategic purchasing. The project will focus on establishing processes in the Environment and Corporate field in the next few months.

3.2.3 **Maximising Local Business Expenditure**: A work programme has been set for the work of maximising local business expenditure. One of the main matters the project will emphasise is the need to provide support for businesses beyond procurement arrangements. It was decided to focus on providing support for businesses in the Construction and Care sector in the first instance.

3.2.4 We currently measure this project by considering a percentage of the Council's procurement expenditure that goes to companies within the County (if the main office has a postcode within the County)(**Caff06 Measure in Appendix 1**). I do not feel that this measure reflects the real situation in terms of procurement expenditure. For example, Wynne Construction, based in Denbighshire, was awarded the majority of construction contracts for 'schools in the 21st century' in Gwynedd, with approximately £8.67m spent by the Council during 2015-16. However, over £3.4m came back into Gwynedd via sub-contracts as Wynnes constructed Ysgol Hafod Lon alone. I am eager for the Department to consider establishing an additional measure that includes financial value that comes into the County via sub-contracts. I can report on this new measure when I will be reporting next time.

3.3. T3 Digital Gwynedd

3.3.1 The purpose of this project is to support efforts to transform the use made of technology by Gwynedd businesses, services and residents by ensuring that there is a provision of up-to-date broadband across the county.

3.3.2 Since I last reported, I have requested that the project focused on sparking interest among businesses of the support available via the Superfast Business Wales programme, as evidence shows that awareness of the support is low. A brief has been formulated to arrange a series of activities to encourage Gwynedd residents and businesses to take advantage of broadband in the County, with the intention of arranging events before the end of November.

3.3.3 Perhaps you will remember that last time I noted a pilot scheme to provide public wi-fi in Aberdaron as part of the project. A recent application for Welsh Government funding to support further wi-fi schemes in the county and to extend the provision of computers available for use by the public was approved. Lack of access to IT/digital equipment has been highlighted as a problem by individuals/groups in our rural communities, therefore, this additional investment will respond to the problem. Additional action points are expected to be seen in public spaces such as libraries, leisure centres, social housing centres and community facilities in rural Gwynedd.

3.3.4 This plan has been working with the Rural Gwynedd Innovation project and Welsh Government to develop a pilot scheme to trial a new method of providing superfast broadband to remote areas using wavelengths that exist between signals by television masts (these are the wavelengths that travel the furthest and are the best to transmit through obstacles such as trees and buildings).

3.3.5 Representatives from Rural Gwynedd Innovation and Welsh Government visited the Isle of Arran in Scotland to see the technology at work, and we intend to trial out the technology at the Trawsfynydd Snowdonia Enterprise Zone site. This will be the first time for the technology to be used in Wales.

3.4. T4 Rural Gwynedd Innovation Scheme

3.4.1 The purpose of this project is to create the conditions to strengthen Gwynedd's rural economy and encourage local enterprises to establish and develop in order to maintain employment. This will be delivered through Rural Gwynedd Innovation - LEADER Rural Development Programme.

- 3.4.2 One of the activities being piloted through this project is the Innovation Hub, namely a new collaboration space with 'hot desk' facilities that has now opened in the Old Library in Porthmadog. The purpose of this pilot is to see whether or not the collaboration space is viable and beneficial within our rural communities. The need for the hub has been highlighted through challenges that face our rural communities. The Dwyfor and Meirionnydd areas are among the highest in terms of individuals who work from their homes. The scheme also makes use of empty buildings in the area. Should the Hub in Porthmadog be successful, it will then be possible to consider further hubs across the County.
- 3.4.2 In addition, this project has worked closely with Friends of the Lloyd George Museum to identify alternative management arrangements and to ensure accreditation for the Museum. This is a good example of how this scheme intertwines with the work of other units in the Department, thus ensuring the transfer of community assets.
- 3.4.4 Due to the innovative nature of LEADER funding, a number of sub-projects have been implemented, but there is no evidence of the impact of these activities at present. I am eager for the scheme to focus on evaluating the impact thus far and to consider mainstreaming some of the schemes that show the greatest impact on Gwynedd residents.

3.5. T5 World Heritage Site

- 3.5.1 The purpose of this project will be to create an economic benefit of Gwynedd's rich heritage. We will focus on existing World Heritage Sites and will submit a case for an existing World Heritage Site status for parts of the slate valleys.
- 3.5.2 The Govannon Consortium continues to work on the nomination for the status, along with the work of mapping options for protection and conservation elements within the proposed site. It is expected that we will identify boundaries for the nomination in the next few months. A final decision on the nomination will be done by February 2018, in accordance with UNESCO's timescale.
- 3.5.3 It is fair to say that the emphasis of the project thus far has been placed on developing the nomination for the status, rather than considering the economic benefit that derives from the work. A Business Group has been established to consider the economic benefit, which is a step forward, but I have also asked the Department to consider changing the emphasis of the project to focus on the economic benefit in the next few months. Specifically, I am eager for us to consider what are the economic opportunities that arise in our communities.
- 3.5.4 Development work continues with the Glannau Menai project, and the application for Europe funding to undertake improvements in order to restore the Former Island Site, for new railway developments, an extension for Galeri 2 and town centre improvements in Caernarfon, was submitted in September. Confirmation of the funding package is expected to be received by mid-November.

3.6. T6 Improving access to employment for the people of the county and responding to barriers

- 3.6.1 The purpose of this project will be to facilitate and implement a package of projects in order to support vulnerable individuals into work. It is a regional project

through the work of the North Wales Ambition Board and Gwynedd has been contributing towards commissioning the work.

- 3.6.2 By now, 133 young people have received support through the TRAC scheme that targets young people who are unlikely to be in work, training or employment. Thus far, 29 young people have moved to education or training after receiving support from the project. This is a step towards reducing the figure of young people who are NEET at 16 years old.
- 3.6.3 Since I last reported, the OPUS scheme that targets vulnerable adults in order to support them into sustainable employment has been approved for Europe funding. The Adults and Well-being Department will lead on implementing this project.
- 3.6.4 Two risks/barriers were identified for this scheme, namely the implications of leaving Europe on the projects' funding resources post 2018. Another matter that can affect the implementation of some projects is the arrival of the Work and Health Programme by Job Centre Plus. Although these two risks are matters beyond our control, it is important that the project plans and considers the next steps in order to ensure that the service provided for our vulnerable residents is not affected.

3.7. T7 High Profile and Strategic Events

- 3.7.1 The purpose of this project is to attract nationally or internationally high-profile events to Gwynedd in order to take advantage of the economic and social benefit which will ensue.
- 3.7.2 This project has supported 15 additional events since the last time I reported on this. Thus far, it can be noted that economic benefit from the events was £1.9m (**TMGC4 Measure - Benefits to the economy from supporting high-profile events in Appendix 1I**), with 4,287 having taken part in the events, and 55 of the County's companies employed to work on the events.

4. MEASURING PERFORMANCE

- 4.1. On the whole, I am satisfied with the performance of most measures for this Department - see **Appendix 1**. I have already referred to some of the measures as I discussed the projects. However, I will draw your attention to the following matter:.
 - 4.1.1 **PENECON01 Number of posts created with the assistance of the Economy and Community Department** - The figure to date is 30. In comparison with previous years, the trend shows that the figure has been reducing annually (234 jobs created in 2014-15 compared to 81 in 2015-16). It is important to note here that this is in accordance with expectation as a result of major programmes such as the Local Investment Fund, that has been providing grants for businesses, coming to an end.
- 4.2 When discussing and challenging the performance of the Department at a recent meeting, I am eager to review some of the measures I report upon to include the work of some units such as Maritime and Country Parks as I consider that some of these measures are important to the people of Gwynedd. The Department is currently working on their business plan, and is reviewing the purposes and measures of services.

5. SAVINGS/FINANCIAL POSITION

- 5.1. I am pleased to be able to report that all of the Economy and Community department's relevant savings schemes for 2016/17 have been realised, and they are also making very acceptable progress towards realising 2017/18 schemes.

6. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

6.1. None to note.

7. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

7.1. Views of the Statutory Officers:

i. The Chief Executive:

"As is clear from the report, this field is a broad one which has several projects to which the report refers.

It is important to note that the 'deterioration' seen in some fields is something that we had anticipated. For example, the reduction in the number of jobs created (PENECON01) is a result of the reduction in external funds available for us to take advantage of. The report also notes some of the reasons for the performance in terms of local companies gaining work."

ii. The Monitoring Officer:

"No observations from a propriety standpoint."

iii. The Head of Finance Department:

"In accordance with previous observations, I can confirm the situation noted in part 5 of the report, which is that the relevant savings plans have been realised, or are on their way to being realised in full and on time."

8.2. Views of the Local Member:

8.2.1 Not a local matter.

8.3. Results of Any Consultation:

8.3.1 None to note.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Measures of the Economy and Community Department