

ITEM 6 - QUESTIONS

(1) Question by Councillor Jina Gwyrfai

What monitoring is done of the social housing stock controlled by the Housing Agencies on behalf of Cyngor Gwynedd to ensure the most effective use for our residents and communities? In particular, what statistics are available to identify

- i) **Under-occupation** (one person in a 3 or 4 bedroom house)
- ii) **Over-occupation** (family (parent(s) and two or more children) in a two bedroom property with the children in an age to have a bedroom of their own due to age/gender legal conditions)
- iii) **Tenant absence** (someone who pays rent but does not live in the property permanently)
- iv) **House swap** by advertising for a private houseswap

Reply - Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Craig ab Iago

As a result of the social housing stock transfer in 2010, Cyngor Gwynedd has no role nor resources to monitor the performance of the Housing Associations operating in the county. The role of monitoring housing associations is a responsibility for Welsh Government through the Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations registered in Wales.

Although the Council has a responsibility for operating the Common Housing Allocation Policy and is responsible for the Housing Register on behalf of the Housing Partnership, the matters raised by the Member are operational matters entirely within the control of the individual housing associations. However, the Council has robust arrangements in place through the Housing Partnership to facilitate collaboration in order to increase the opportunities for Gwynedd residents to have access to affordable housing, and the Housing and Property Department has already written formally to the housing associations to request the information.

(2) Question by Councillor Angela Russell

As Leader of Gwynedd's Independent Group, I would like an update on the investigations into how the former headteacher of Ysgol Friars, who has been found guilty and sentenced, was able to continue his predatory behaviour over many years in this county. Due to the seriousness of the case, the Independent Group is currently in contact with the Welsh Government to request a Statutory Public Inquiry into this distressing matter.

Reply - Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown

As Cabinet Member for Education on Cyngor Gwynedd I have followed the case of former headteacher Neil Foden with alarm, and disgust at what he did. I welcome the sentencing and hope the result brings some peace to the victims and their families. What happened to the girls Neil Foden abused is nothing short of a tragedy.

We will know more about the details of the lessons to be learned and what exactly happened when the North Wales Safeguarding Board review reports, and I commit to implementing whatever recommendations they make. The review has started over the last few days under the Chairmanship of Jan Pickles and they will report back when they are ready to do so.

(3) Question by Councillor Elin Hywel

Considering the inseparable bond of economy, community, language and heritage; what steps is this Council undertaking to ensure the protection and sustainability of the heritage economy sectors and related traditional skills of the communities of Gwynedd?

Reply - The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for the Economy, Councillor Nia Jeffreys

I would like to thank the Councillor for the question.

Traditional economic sectors continue to be an important component of Gwynedd's economy. In 2023 ([UK Business Counts ONS survey 2023 - NOMIS](#)) 1,188 (22.5%) businesses in Gwynedd were registered in the agricultural sector, 30 forestry businesses (0.6%), 30 fishing businesses (0.6%) and 10 quarrying businesses (0.2%) were registered. While the percentages of these businesses continue to exceed the national average, the number of businesses and employees within the sectors has declined significantly over the years. In 2022 ([Business Register and Employment ONS survey 2022 - NOMIS](#)), 4,500 (7.5%) workers were recorded in the agriculture sector, 75 (0.1%) in forestry, 35 (0.1%) workers fishing and 250 (0.4%) working in the quarrying sector.

The evolution of these sectors over the centuries has shaped our communities, forged identities and left a rich cultural legacy.

The Council's Plan recognises the value of heritage and the relationship with the economy and language. Prosperous Gwynedd Priority Projects show that action in this area is being taken by Cyngor Gwynedd, including:

- Arfor Programme – Cyngor Gwynedd, through its ARFOR partnership, has been researching the relationship between language and economy and trialling different economic development interventions to gather evidence about the impact of different economic policies on the Welsh language. We will continue to monitor the impact and evaluate the investment over the next year.
- Slate Programme – creating prosperity from the Northwest Wales Slate Landscape World Heritage Site designation is one of the priority areas within our Plan. The relationship between heritage and the Welsh language is at the core of this scheme along with the collaboration between a range of community, private and public sector partners to own the benefits. There is an £18.6M investment from the UK Government's Levelling-Up Fund in the Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme to create more local benefits from the heritage and the successful Heritage Lottery bid will in addition focus on developing traditional construction skills.
- Business and Enterprise Support Programme – businesses face constant challenges when having to face changing market demand, production costs and technology development. Cyngor Gwynedd has taken steps to support businesses to adapt and innovate to protect and create new employment in our

- communities. Over £2M has been committed to support various businesses between 2023 and 2024. It is conditional for all enterprises to promote the use of the Welsh language and invest in a living wage for their employees and a number of traditional businesses and enterprises promoting heritage have received funding. Examples from 2023 include a £250,000 investment from Gwynedd Council, through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund for EcoMuseum and £400,000 in the Môr Ni project to support the marine and fishing sector.
- Rural Innovation Centre Glynllifon – Cyngor Gwynedd is working with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and its partners on the Ambition North Wales Board, to develop a centre to further develop skills for the agri-food sector. The work couples traditional skills with contemporary skills and technology to ensure the viability of future enterprises.
 - Diwyllesiant Project – £1.6M has been invested through the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund to support local communities and organisations between 2023 and 2024 to develop cultural and heritage projects across the county.

Cyngor Gwynedd will be preparing a new Economic Plan this year to set the direction for the 2025-2028 investment programmes. I anticipate that there will be a lot more scrutiny of economic priorities over the coming months to make the best use of the resources available to maintain and create quality employment in Gwynedd into the future.

(4) Question by Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts

The Environment Department has been kind enough to provide a list, ward by ward, of the schemes worth more than £100,000 undertaken to improve the infrastructure of the county's roads, paths and pavements in the last five years. Of the 22 schemes, there is one that applies to the county as a whole (the 20mph scheme) and another that is split quite evenly between the main towns (Gwynedd charging points). Of the remaining twenty schemes, 5 are in Meirionnydd and 12 in Arfon and the Lôn Las Eifion scheme could be added to the latter, as, despite its name, it is in the Arfon area, apart from the extreme western end of the path which is in the Clynnog ward. That leaves two schemes in Dwyfor. Two out of twenty. What explains this disproportionality?

Reply - Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Dafydd Meurig

The Member's analysis is correct in the context of the information provided in response to a fairly specific question and criteria.

Other/wider transport projects have been realised in Gwynedd which are not included in the response to the Member. For example, a depot and charging infrastructure for the innovative electric buses operating on the route of the T22 is located in Porthmadog. We are also working on other schemes in Dwyfor including working with Aldi for the introduction of walking and cycling paths on the road outside the new supermarket in Pwllheli.

The profile of what it is possible to achieve and where will also change over time and the value of projects can vary significantly which means that the number of projects in itself is only one measure. £350k has been secured this year to improve safe routes outside the new Ysgol Treferyth in Cricieth.

The information provided refers to projects where applications for grant funding have been successful. Other applications have been submitted, including in the Dwyfor area, which have not been successful for more than one reason. This includes that the Welsh Government sets annual budgets for various grants and the number and value of applications significantly exceeds the funds available to develop and realise them across Wales. There are specific criteria associated with some grants not conducive to rural areas that make the case challenging if not impossible. Developing quality applications takes considerable resource in itself and capacity is therefore also a factor in the number and quality of applications that can be developed and presented each year.

Taking the above into account it would be very difficult to make an objective assessment of whether there is a disparity because there are so many factors influencing this.

The Transport Service will continue in its efforts to develop projects that benefit communities across Gwynedd. This is done recognising there will be different stakeholders with different views and priorities in terms of what and where projects should be undertaken. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to satisfy or meet everyone's aspirations and expectations. The Service's approach is to maximise the resources available and to continue to realise and deliver transport projects on a year-by-year basis. This includes developing and strengthening applications that have been unsuccessful in the past.