

# CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET



## Report to a meeting of Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

**Date of meeting: 8 April 2025**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor R Medwyn Hughes**

**Contact Officer: Sioned Williams**

**Contact Number: 01286 679547**

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

### **1. THE DECISION SOUGHT**

To accept and note the information in the report.

---

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

In order to ensure effective performance management

---

### **3. INTRODUCTION**

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to update fellow members on what has happened over the past few months in the areas I am responsible for as Cabinet Member for the 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.

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

- 4.1 The table in APPENDIX 1 gives an update on the progress of the four priority projects in the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 that the Economy and Community Department is responsible for implementing. Three of these projects are in the Prosperous Gwynedd section of the Plan, which aims to strengthen the economy and support Gwynedd residents to earn a worthy wage. However, the responsibility to lead a workstream within the 'Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities' project in the Caring Gwynedd programme has been transferred to the Department since the beginning of January 2025.

4.2 From the information in the Appendix, you will note that the Department has made good progress against the main milestones of these projects over recent months. The main risk that is common to these four schemes is that there is uncertainty regarding the future of the budgets that have funded the work since 2023. This refers mainly to the budget of the ARFOR Programme, the Levelling-Up Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).

4.3 I would like to draw specific attention to the following matters:

**Priority Project: Promoting our Culture and a Sustainable Visitor Economy**

4.3.1 A Sustainable Visitor Economy Summit was held on 14 February 2025 where over 100 attendees from various businesses, organisations and communities across Gwynedd and Eryri came together to discuss the next steps to implement our Gwynedd and Eryri Visitor Economy Plan 2035. It was a successful event and there was very positive feedback from the attendees. The Visitor Economy Partnership will reflect on the contributions and enthusiasm of partners to ensure there is a clear benefit for communities in developing the action plan for 2025/26.

4.3.2 When reflecting on the fact that 109 Gwynedd cultural organisations have received support through the Diwylliesiant Project over the past year and with uncertainty about funding beyond 2025/26 to support the sector, a Gwynedd Culture event was held on 18 February 2025 to celebrate the important contribution of the sector to the well-being of Gwynedd residents. Over 70 partners attended and it was agreed that a vision and principles needed to be developed for the investment sector in future.

4.3.3 I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) investment timetable has changed, with an opportunity to make a case to extend the fund's expenditure until the end of 2027 and achieve some outcomes by the end of 2029. This will affect partners' investment timetable in the Llewyrch o'r Llechi project and we will be reviewing some agreements with partners in the communities in the coming week. I am pleased to say that some aspects of the scheme have now been completed, and it was a pleasure to visit Neuadd Ogwen recently, which has received a grant of £648,972.65 through Cyngor Gwynedd's Llewyrch o'r Llechi project to upgrade facilities, and to hear about the direct benefits to the community from the investment.

**Priority Project: Regenerating Communities and Town Centres**

4.3.4 The project has achieved all the agreed milestones for the last quarter, but there is considerable effort by the service at present to complete expenditure on various grants and to support partners to overcome obstacles to achieve outcomes and submit full claims.

**Priority Project: Create the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for businesses and community enterprises to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work**

- 4.3.5 Over the last quarter, significant work has been undertaken by the Service to complete expenditure on projects under the Welsh Government's ARFOR programme and the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). These programmes have included funds to support businesses and community enterprises to thrive and support the people of Gwynedd into work. To date, 573 enterprises have received support through SPF and ARFOR and 184 have been supported to return to work.
- 4.3.6 While the ARFOR programme evaluation report shows clear benefits for businesses and communities; promotes the use and visibility of the Welsh language and highlights job opportunities for young people within the ARFOR region, the future of the programme remains uncertain with no commitment from the Welsh Government to fund it again in 2025/26.
- 4.3.7 I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the UK Government has now confirmed arrangements to extend SPF for another year, but that there is 49% less funding available for Gwynedd and the counties of North Wales. An event was held on 12 March in Porthmadog to celebrate what has been achieved with SPF funding to date. At the end of the programme, we will produce a booklet to share to highlight the value of the different projects across Gwynedd, but this video <https://youtu.be/IP1wKeMwnIE> may give you a taste of what has been achieved. Although we are continuing to evaluate the impact of projects in the 2022/25 programme, the work of identifying priorities for 2025/26 has already commenced.
- 4.3.8 You will note from the appendix that contractual works for the development of 10 new business units in Minffordd are nearing completion, with an intention to commence the construction work in the second quarter of 2025/26. In addition, you will note that the timetable for the preparation of the new Economic Strategy has slipped as a result of the UK Government's decision to offer SPF funding for an additional year to Local Authorities.

**Priority Project: Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities**

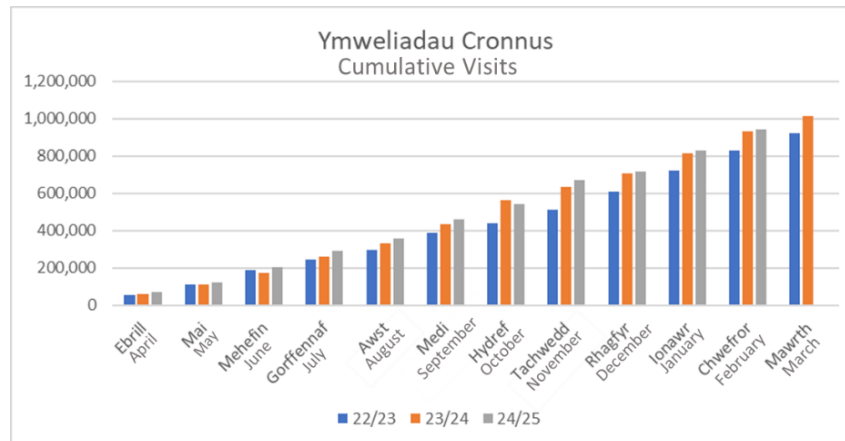
- 4.3.9 While the main milestones of this project have been achieved, I am keen to review our arrangements to support the hubs in order to create a model that would be more sustainable for the future. We will report further on this over the next year.

**5. PERFORMANCE OF DEPARTMENT SERVICES**

- 5.1 The Department's Performance Dashboard is reviewed regularly. There was an opportunity to scrutinise the performance of the various services at a meeting on 24 March 2024 and I would like to draw the attention of Cabinet Members to the following matters:

**Leisure Resources Service - Byw'n Iach, Padarn and Glynllifon Country Parks**

- 5.2 The grant investment work at Parc Padarn and Glynllifon is ongoing. Clear challenges have arisen during the development phase and arrangements to collect customer satisfaction scores are affected by the work.
- 5.3 Last time, we reported on the recovery of Cwmni Byw'n Iach in providing services. It is seen again that the number of visits to leisure centres was higher in recent months compared to the same periods for 2023/4 and 2022/23.



- 5.4 However, I am concerned that the number of pupils in Gwynedd who receive swimming lessons at our centres continues to fall. Pre-Covid, 85% of KS2 children receiving swimming lessons in Byw'n Iach pools met the national curriculum standard for basic swimming skills. By the end of Summer 2024, we can be certain that only 54% of all KS2 children can swim. 30% of those assessed had failed as they had not had enough sessions, and 16% had not received an assessment as schools had not brought pupils to lessons.
- 5.5 The concern is that some of the schools with the highest levels of deprivation in the county have the lowest levels of swimming skills. The National Curriculum does not specifically include swimming, so there is a complete reliance on individual schools to prioritise within the area of health and well-being. The financial situation has led to a large number of schools cutting back on the provision with transport costs often reported as a particular barrier.
- 5.6 In response, I would like to inform the Cabinet that I have agreed with the Cabinet Member for Education to share details of school swimming rates with the governing bodies of Gwynedd schools and ask them to give further consideration to the risks and inequality across the county.

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

- 5.7 The number of customers with a mooring contract increased by 6.5% in our harbours compared to the previous year, an increase from 250 to 266 (not including Hafan Pwllheli and Caernarfon Dock). However, a large number of boats have been removed from their moorings over the winter period to protect them from damage during inclement weather and to enable owners to undertake maintenance. The service has commenced the process of corresponding with all customers to invite them to re-apply for a mooring in 2025. Since the beginning of the year a number of enquiries have been received across the harbours from new boat owners wishing to moor in Gwynedd, which is very encouraging.
- 5.8 It is also encouraging to see that the majority of our customers at Hafan Pwllheli are keen to continue with the agreement in 2025/26. 9% have cancelled their contract, which is a normal turnover level (it can be up to 15%). The main reasons for cancellations are that sailing costs are increasing, weather and the age of the boat owner. However, reference is also made to the environment of Hafan and Pwllheli including the dredging challenge and the onshore services available (restaurants, hotels, shops etc.). A Dredging Plan is in place and the other issues are being taken into account in future investment plans.
- 5.9 Caernarfon Harbour Trust manages Victoria Dock on behalf of Cyngor Gwynedd through a historic agreement. This agreement needs to be reviewed and we will be working over the next few months to agree new terms with the Trust for the future.

### **Archives, Museums, Arts and Libraries Services**

- 5.10 In January and February, 244 users completed the Archives customer satisfaction questionnaire with 92% of users very satisfied with the service, 2% satisfied, 1% of users indicating that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 5% dissatisfied. The majority of comments received were positive, such as "Excellent and friendly service", "Very grateful for all the support", "Effective service". Of those who were dissatisfied, comments were received such as "The opening hours (days) are the only thing that lets you down", "Opening hours/days. It is inconvenient to have to limit it to only 3 days". Opening hours were reduced to the minimum allowed by the National Archives as a result of cuts in 2016.
- 5.11 The development work at the Lloyd George Museum is nearing completion and we look forward to re-opening and welcoming the public to the Museum in its new guise over Easter.
- 5.12 The demand for the café in Storiell continues. Various provision options have been considered over the past few months including partnering with Bangor University and Cyngor Gwynedd's Adults Service. Although these options are no longer possible, opportunities to work with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai are being considered before going out to tender.

- 5.13 The last few months have been busy but successful for the team at Neuadd Dwyfor. The satisfaction rate remains quite high, with the usual rate between 90%-96% and the regular comments praising the facilities, staff and customer care. Following the introduction of a full programme of events, the number of visits has increased. There has also been considerable experimentation over the period, such as a film club on Monday nights where tables and seats are set up in front of the screen and attendees are encouraged to bring a take-away with them to enjoy the film with a drink from the bar. During these evenings, we have seen an increase in our sales of food and drink.
- 5.14 Thanks to SPF funding, a new lighting desk has arrived at Neuadd Dwyfor with a new projector to be installed in April. These will ensure the sustainability of Neuadd Dwyfor as a cultural destination for the residents of Gwynedd for years to come.
- 5.15 Data from the latest customer satisfaction survey of the Libraries Service shows that 98% of users are very happy with the service. Several correspondences have come to my attention depicting the impact that the Library service has on the residents of Gwynedd. Here is an example from a customer in Tywyn Library: '... the library ... is a valuable resource for the community. Not only in the local area but further afield as well. Value for money, it has to be one of the best services provided by Cyngor Gwynedd. The building is certainly used to its full potential. All staff on the site put in 100% effort to provide the best possible service to their clients. Apart from the usual library services, which are well used. The number of local activities taking place in that Building is impressive to say the least. They range from Writing Groups, Chess Groups, Mother and Baby Groups. There are a number of other groups which are too many to mention.'

### **Economy and Regeneration Services**

- 5.16 The Economic Development, Tourism, Regeneration and Community Support services have focused their efforts over recent months on the implementation of the priority projects outlined in Appendix 1. The performance of these services has therefore been reported therein.

## **6. FINANCIAL POSITION**

- 6.1 The Department has a scheme to generate savings of £100,000 between 2022/23 - 2024/25, namely the scheme to remodel Neuadd Dwyfor. The Covid-19 crisis led to a delay in the realisation of development work at the Neuadd, but the work has now been completed. Despite this, it is clear that the crisis and increase in living costs, along with other factors such as the impact of the new form of watching films, with a large number of people awaiting the release of films on the internet/television, raises concern about our ability to fully implement the savings. Although there has been an increase in the number of users of the Neuadd as reported in 5.13, it is difficult to see

a long-term impact on numbers attending the Neuadd. Discussions are underway to identify a reasonable plan of action in the short term.

- 6.2 One savings scheme continues from previous years (£45,000 in total), which is subject to on-site parking charges. The work has now been completed and local discussions will continue regarding future site management arrangements, including fees to be introduced.
- 6.3 With the exception of scheme savings set out in 4.1 and 4.2, the remaining schemes that had been programmed have been realised in 2024/25, with current schemes worth £135,020 programmed for 2025/26.
- 6.4 A comprehensive financial performance of the Department's position was reported at the 21 January 2025 Cabinet meeting, with projections that the Department will overspend by the end of the 2024/25 financial year. The overspend is mainly due to a lack of income at Neuadd Dwyfor, due to the reasons stated in 4.1, along with the increased costs of running Byw'n lach properties, a lack of income in the Maritime service and a lack of income from Storiell. A combination of underspending on other headings coupled with the use of reserves reduces the reported overspend to £239k. A comprehensive report on the final position of the Department's financial performance will be submitted to the Cabinet on 13 May 2025.
- 6.5 We will continue to review the areas closely in the new financial year, hoping to identify opportunities to implement savings where possible.

## **STATUTORY OFFICERS' VIEWS**

### **Monitoring Officer:**

*"No observations to add in relation to propriety."*

### **Chief Finance Officer:**

*"I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of the Economy and Community Department".*